National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et
des services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

NOTICE

The quality of this microform is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Reproduction in full or in part of this microform is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30, and subsequent amendments.

AVIS

La qualité de cette microforme dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

La reproduction, même partielle, de cette microforme est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30, et ses amendements subséquents.

Canadä

University of Alberta

Listening to Young Women

By Valerie G. Pawluk ©

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in
Partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education

The Department of Elementary Education

Edmonton, Alberta
Spring, 1994

National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et
des services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted an irrevocable non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of his/her thesis by any means and in any form or format, making this thesis available to interested persons.

L'auteur a accordé une licence irrévocable et non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de sa thèse de quelque manière et sous quelque forme que ce soit pour mettre des exemplaires de cette thèse à la disposition des personnes intéressées.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in his/her thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège sa thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

ISBN 0-612-11324-8

Canada

University of Alberta
Release Form

NAME OF AUTHOR: ***Valerie Pawluk***

TITLE OF THESIS: ***Listening To Young Women***

DEGREE: ***Master of Education***

YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED: ***Spring 1994***

Permission is hereby granted to the University of Alberta Library to reproduce single copies of this thesis and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly or scientific research purposes only.

The author reserves all publication and other rights in association with the copyright in the thesis, and except as hereinbefore provided neither the thesis nor any substantial portion thereof may be printed or otherwise reproduced in any material form whatever without the author's prior written permission.

Valerie Pawluk

Center for Research for Teacher Education and
Development
Faculty of Education 3-102 Education Centre North
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Canada T6G 2G5

DATE Dec. 22/93

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **Listening to Young Women** submitted by **Valerie Pawluk** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

Jean Clandinin

Dr. D. J. Clandinin, Supervisor
Elementary Education

Dr. Julia Ellis
Elementary Education

W. G. Maynes

Dr. Bill Maynes
Educational Administration

Dedication

To

My parents for their constant care and attention;

Educators who provide a safe space for learners to speak; and

Girls and women striving to find ways in which to be heard.

Abstract

According to some studies, young women begin silencing themselves during the adolescent years. This narrative inquiry describes the lived and told experiences of five young women in conversation. Authentic conversation was the goal. There were two main purposes of this study. The first was to create a safe environment for these adolescent women to explore their voices, to tell their stories, to experience a place where they learned to be supported and learned to support others. The second purpose was to develop my own sensitivity as a teacher to find ways to support and challenge adolescent women in their development and discovery of voice.

The private conversations occurred during school hours. Data included taped conversations, journals, letters and poetry. Most themes which emerged were relational. Behaviors which indicated both conflict and caring were observed and reported. Stories of silencing, speaking, knowing and not knowing were closely monitored and encouraged.

Acknowledgments

It was important to me that the research and thesis evolve. Throughout the entire process, from conception to completion, I listened to many voices. It was important that I listened to the participants, the existing literature, fellow researchers, other women and men and the voices within me.

I am eternally grateful to those who supported this research and the thesis. Without this support it would have been very difficult for me to say what I believe needed to be said. Firstly, I thank Jean Clandinin who listened to what I had to say and encouraged me to search myself and others to find my answers. I am also extremely grateful for the time and energy she used to help edit this document.

I thank Marissa, Paula, Annie, Malory and Nikki for sharing their stories with me and for the additional time they spent in reading drafts of the thesis. They helped me say what was important in their lives. In addition, I thank them for being very cooperative and accommodating. They are very special and brave young women.

I especially appreciated my family's encouragement and support: my mom, Helen, and my dad, Paul, for nurturing me and showing they care; my sisters, Lorna and Joanne, for believing in my abilities; and Lorelei, my 'adopted' sister, for listening to me in my joy and happiness, as well as in my sadness and frustration.

I would also like to thank my friends Vic and Jim for reading the thesis and in giving me feedback. I also want to thank other friends in showing they cared by supporting and encouraging me to say what I needed to say.

I greatly appreciated the comments, questions and conversation of my committee members, Jean Clandinin, Julia Ellis and Bill Maynes, at my oral presentation. Their interest in the research helped me believe in the importance of this work.

Lastly, I thank the Department of Elementary Education at the University of Alberta in allowing me the space to complete a project that has helped me grow as a woman, a researcher, and a contributing member of this society.

Table Of Contents

Part 1: Welcome

- ***Chapter 1* Creating My Own Path** 2
  - *The Conception* 2
  - *The Search Within* 4
  - *The Need to Create* 7
- ***Chapter 2* Attending to the Literature** 10
  - *Adolescent Women* 11
    - *Their Families* 12
    - *Their Schools* 14
    - *Their Friendships* 17
    - *Their Extracurricular Activities* 18
    - *Their Cultures* 19
  - *Preparing the Tools: Empowerment* 20
  - *Reading and Responding* 22
  - *Anticipation* 26
- ***Chapter 3* The Composition** 27
  - *Thinking, Reading, Writing, Talking* 28
  - *Presenting to the Community.* 29
  - *Preparing to Proceed* 29
  - *"Do You Trust Me?"* 31
  - *Choosing the Co-researchers* 32
  - *Opening the Conversations* 34
  - *Choosing the Literature* 35
  - *Becoming Leaders* 36
  - *Introducing* 37
    - *Paula* 37
    - *Nicky* 38
    - *Annie* 38
    - *Malory* 38
    - *Marissa* 39

Part 2: Portraits

- ***Chapter 4* Paula** 41
  - *Loyalty to the Research and the Researchers* 42
  - *Her Family* 43
  - *Her Peers* 46
  - *Young Men* 47
  - *School* 48
  - *Wit and Humor* 49
  - *Sports and Recreation* 50
  - *Making Sense of Her World* 51
  - *Self-Confidence* 51

- *The Young Woman* . . . 52

Chapter 5 ☙☙☙ Nikki . . . 53
- *Family Relationship* . . . 53
- *Stories She Tells Others About Herself as a Little Girl* . . . 56
- *Friendships* . . . 57
- *Relationships with Young Men* . . . 58
- *Stories of the Supernatural* . . . 60
- *Sports* . . . 61
- *Other Passions* . . . 62
- *Dreams and Aspirations* . . . 63
- *School* . . . 63
- *Don't Worry, Be Happy* . . . 64
- *The Young Woman* . . . 65

Chapter 6 ☙☙☙ Annie . . . 66
- *Family* . . . 67
- *Peers* . . . 69
- *School* . . . 70
- *Relationships with Young Men* . . . 71
- *Learning From the World Around Her* . . . 73
- *Fascination with the Supernatural* . . . 74
- *Her Poetry* . . . 75
- *Dreams and Aspirations* . . . 76
- *Conflicts* . . . 76
- *The Essence* . . . 78

Chapter 7 ☙☙☙ Malory . . . 79
- *Family* . . . 79
- *Peers* . . . 82
- *Female Friends* . . . 83
- *The Men in Malory's Life* . . . 84
- *School* . . . 86
- *Stories of Drugs and Alcohol* . . . 86
- *The Many Voices of Malory* . . . 87
  - *Joker Voice* . . . 87
  - *Supporter Voice* . . . 87
  - *Controller Voice* . . . 88
  - *Innocent Voice* . . . 89
  - *Manipulator Voice* . . . 89
  - *Voiceless* . . . 89
- *Dreams and Aspirations* . . . 90
- *Malory's Nature* . . . 90

Chapter 8 ☙☙☙ Marissa . . . 92
- *Family* . . . 92
- *School* . . . 96
- *As Humanitarian* . . . 98
- *Young Men* . . . 98

- *Friendships* 99
- *Ambitions* 100
- *Interest in the Researcher* 101
- *Self-Image* 102
- *The Essence* 103

Part 3: Connections

Chapter 9 Relationships 105
- *Conflicts* 106
- *Intimacy/Teasing* 111
- *Intimacy/Laughter* 112
- *Shared Experiences* 113
- *Demonstrating Caring* 114
- *Being the One Caring* 115
- *Being the One Cared For* 117
- *Faithfulness to Others* 119

Chapter 10 Hearing the Voices 123
- *Knowing/Not knowing* 123
- *Silencing/Speaking* 127
- *Connecting with One Another* 130
- *Listening for the Voice of Self* 132

Chapter 11 Reflections on the Research 133
- *Planning* 133
- *The Conversation Space* 134
- *Reading* 134
- *The Topics Discussed* 135
- *Weaving Our Stories Together* 135
- *Showing My Interest.* 137
- *Showing Their Interest in the Research* 138
- *Writing it Up* 138
- *Echoes* 139
- *Parallel Stories* 140
- *The Researcher's Final Reflections* 141

References 142
Appendix A: *Letter to Young Women and Their Guardians* 146
Appendix B: *Reading Survey* 147
Appendix C: *Book List* 149
Appendix D: *List of Topics by Participants.* 150
Appendix E: *Topics* 151

Part 1: Welcome

When I think about my adolescent years, memories of uncertainty, silencing and isolation prevail. I am convinced that during these years I silenced myself because I lacked the skill to learn about and understand myself. I did not realize I could find the answers inside myself; I did not trust myself. The reasons for silencing myself may be numerous but, for the most part, I believe those around me, including family, teachers and peers, were not able to motivate and nurture me for the purpose of empowerment. I chose silence and isolation. I was not aware of any opportunities at the time to help me understand myself and my relationships with others. I feel if I had been in a situation where I could have talked about my thoughts and feelings about myself, I would have learned I was not alone, that others had similar feelings and experiences. Of course, I can only predict what could have happened. I feel time in such a situation might have helped me develop a much deeper connection to my peers, greater knowledge of myself, and a greater trust and confidence in who I was and what I was becoming. Most importantly, I feel I would have chosen to isolate myself much less often from my family and peers.

In this study I wanted to create a space for young women to be in such conversations in order to discover more about themselves and others. I wanted to create a space such as the one I now feel would have helped me as an adolescent. My research, therefore, is a study of a possible kind of space and girls' experience of that space.

Chapter 1

Creating My Own Path

When I thought about how this research evolved, I became curious about what really focused me on this topic. Some of my university courses led me onto a path of my own self-discovery as well as created within me a strong belief in the kind of opportunities learners should be given. A few of them also helped me sort through experiences learners should not have. I continued to be attracted towards stories and essays about women and their development. I am certain, however, that an important reason for my interest was knowing how to best support my Little Sister, 'Suzie,' since I became a Big Sister through 'Big Sister and Big Brother Society' in the fall of 1991. My desire to help youth prompted me to join this organization. Once I did, it was important that I learned how best to support and nurture her. In developing competence in this area, I became so focused on this topic that I relate many more experiences to my learning and use the learning around Suzie to help nurture and support others around me. The following is part of the story I am living and learning by being in relationship with her.

The Conception

One is there
Another joins
Both have their own beginnings
Ideas, thoughts, feelings, people, meanings
But they come together
They search together
In the lives of each other
To create something completely new
Where two becomes one.

By the movement in my stomach, those butterflies that showed up that morning had turned into unicorns as I stepped out of the car and began walking toward the apartment building. Barb, my case worker, drove up as I approached the sidewalk. As she pressed the buzzer of apartment #207, I explained how nervous I was. Moments later, over the crackles of the speaker, a woman's voice answered the loud buzz.

"Yeah?" she asked.

"It's Barb."

"Come on up," the voice responded.

As we walked down the hallway to the apartment, I thought about how the months of planning for this day hadn't really prepared me for this moment. I couldn't remember the last time I was so nervous.

A door at the end of the hall opened and a young girl peered from out of her home.

"Hello, Emillie," Barb acknowledged and we walked into the small, inner city apartment.

"She's here Suzie," the young girl called excitedly.

"Come into the living room," a voice summoned.

We walked into the room scattered with books, pieces of paper, ashtrays, dirty dishes, clothes and many unidentifiable objects. My eyes quickly scanned the room, to find the face I had seen only in a photograph taken three years earlier.

There she was, sitting on the floor in the corner of the room.

"Val, this is Leanne," Barb introduced a woman a bit older than I, "and this is Suzie and Emillie." She motioned to the two girls that were now in the room.

I wanted to make such a good impression because I wanted my new "Little Sister" to like me, so, being as polite as I knew how, I mumbled something that everyone says on meeting someone new.

The girl that was my new "Little Sister" was bright-eyed, had the complexion of a baby and had scruffy light-colored hair. When she stood up I could see how thin she was, but thin like most sprouting bodies at this age are. There was something about how she moved, with a sophistication that did not belong to this setting. She, I think, was trying to impress me too. It worked.

This was the beginning of a new relationship for me. Little did I know that it would also be a place where two stories crossed, where I began my exploration of what I now call "empowerment" and "voice."

Suzie and I went to Fantasyland to celebrate our first anniversary in November of 1992, the time I began writing my proposal for this study. We went on almost every ride. Even though I closed my eyes during the "Drop of Doom", thought I would be flung through the air and smashed against the wall while on the giant swings and almost blacked out riding the crazy roller coaster called the Mindbender, I had a great time being with this young woman for whom I had grown to care. So much has happened since I first met Suzie, for both her and me. The experiences and learnings that I have had around this relationship have been immense and immeasurable.

In developing in this relationship, in the time we spend together, and in the stories we create together, I often think of my own confusing adolescence. There are not many things I can remember about my adolescence. However, there are some memories that are stronger and more important than others.

The 'what ifs' keep coming up for me. What if someone would have said they believed in me? What if I had had the opportunity to speak with others in the same situation? What if I had been openly supported in ways that empowered me? I know that going back and dwelling on these 'what ifs' will not accomplish anything for the way I am now and especially for the way I was then. But by looking at my silence and isolation I can speculate about what would empower others, about what might have empowered me at that age.

My story did not begin the same as Suzie's, nor did I have the same experiences. However, her story of adolescence is still forming and changing, where mine is history. This is where our stories cross, where two becomes one.

The Search Within

'Hello, do you hear me?' a little voice whispers.
'I'm here. Don't you know?' it continues.
I'm unsure about it, I've never listened to it before.
Do I trust it? Will it hurt?
It continues to get louder, and I begin to listen.
I begin by questioning it, so I will not believe all it says
It may deceive me, it may hurt me
It gets so loud it begins to take over and control my essence
It does not deceive me, it wouldn't intentionally hurt me
It helps me by asking questions and letting me find my own answers
It helps me search inside
It remains faithful.

In developing a topic for study I searched for many answers and constructed new questions. Many stories, ideas, conceptions, and themes came up for me, twisting and churning together, to help formulate and mold what was most important for me as a learner, educator, and contributing member of society. In my exploration I have continued and will continue to construct my knowing by connecting what I learn from outside authority with my own experiences of when I was an adolescent and also in the relationships I have or have had with adolescents. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule (1986) expressed that "*all knowledge is constructed,* and *the knower is an intimate part of the known*" (p. 137). These researchers identified ways women come to know and learn. Through their descriptions I believe I am a constructivist. "Constructivists become passionate knowers, knowers who enter into a union with that which is to be known" (p. 141).

One of the most important themes that emerged has been that of my own personal empowerment. By empowerment, I have come to mean more of a personal power or, as defined by Heilbrun (1988), "power is the ability to take one's place in whatever discourse is essential to action and the right to have one's part matter" (p. 18). I continue to develop and maintain my own personal power, often struggling with preconceptions and societal expectations of what I should be or how I ought to act as a woman, a friend, a daughter, a sister, a student and a teacher. Making sense of my roles and expectations of myself continues to change, to evolve. Sometimes the process is more definite and, at other times, it is unclear. Miller (1986) reminded me that "a necessary part of all experience is a recognition of one's weaknesses and limitations. That most valuable of human qualities - the ability to grow psychologically - is necessarily an ongoing process, involving repeated feelings of vulnerability all through life" (p. 31).

My voice struggles much of the time since I am unsure of its power and unsure of the reaction of others. By voice I have come to mean speaking about what I believe in, rather than what I think others may want me to say. Britzman (1990) articulates more clearly and eloquently.

> Voice is meaning that resides in the individual and enables that individual to participate in a community ... The struggle for voice begins when a person attempts to communicate meaning to someone else. Finding the words, speaking for oneself, and feeling heard by others are all a part of this process ... Voice suggests relationships: the individual's relationship to the meaning of her/his experience and hence, to language, and the individual's relationship to the other, since understanding is a social process. (p. 4)

Miller (1986) pointed out "women have been so encouraged to concentrate on the emotions and reactions of others that they have been diverted from examining and expressing their own emotions" (p. 39). But when I let my voice out, I feel powerful and alive, eager to support those around me and prepared to take on the fiercest beasts, those in my head and those in my world. During the periods I struggle, I am able to "move beyond discouragement" since I believe I have started "out with a core of confidence and strength" and am "lucky enough to continue to grow through environments that do not exploit the residual vulnerabilities everyone brings from childhood" (Bateson, 1989, p. 37).

In my evolution, I continue to be interested in helping people learn about themselves, hoping that they will discover and nurture their own voices. In my search to construct my knowing, I sorted through and selected stories in my past that related to personal empowerment. I came to know many of these through experiencing my own growth and through being in relationship with others, such as friends, family and students.

> Constructivists seek to stretch the outer boundaries of their consciousness - by making the unconscious conscious, by consulting and listening to the self, by voicing the unsaids, by listening to others and staying alert to all the currents and undercurrents of life about them, by imagining themselves inside the new poem or person or idea that they want to come to know and understand. (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986, p. 141)

The stories I remember also connect me with who I am and what is important to me. The stories I see in my future have much to do with supporting others in their development of voice.

In trying to make sense of my adolescence I think about the painful and anxious times, the times where I was very confused and the times where I was reaching out but closing myself off at the same time. I didn't know how to open up. I didn't know it could be so freeing. At the time, I thought I had some close friends but I guess we were never really that close since I never opened up to them. For the most part, I isolated myself.

In thinking back about what I connected with, I think about the summer I read voraciously, as Suzie continues to do. I made connections with what I was reading, immersing myself into the lives of the characters in those stories. Getting entangled in their stories, rather than creating my own, was what was safe for me. I often hoped I could be like the characters in the stories, but I believed that would never be. I made many excuses, most of which weren't credible, when I think about them now. In reflecting, though, I wasn't sure of myself and I felt inadequate.

The connections I make with adolescence come to me in a wave of frustration, anger, fear and anxiety. Gilligan (1989) described the time of adolescence as being the time when "girls are in danger of drowning or disappearing" (p. 10). At this time I fought; my voice fought to continue, fought to reach out. However, no one was there. They, nor I, knew how to connect, to move out of isolation, to keep myself visible to myself and to others. I continued to push others away, especially my family. I thought I was doing what was best for me. I did not know how else to relate to those very important people around me, so I isolated myself. My place in the family was an uncomfortable place to be so I removed myself by making superficial connections with peers and by getting lost in what I read.

Later, I grew to feel guilty about the way I acted then. For the first few years of my twenties I continually tried to please, doing what was expected of me, so I could somehow make up for the times I had expressed my hurt and anger in destructive ways. It became important to have my family's approval. In my struggle to reconnect with my family, I continued to silence myself. I continued to be silent as I became more compliant and much more quiet. It was important to be liked and accepted so I thought this was the only way. My silence continued, although it was changed by my intentions. It changed from silence as rebellion in my adolescence to silence as pleasing in my early twenties.

I began listening to the whispers that told me to go back to school, that I was smart enough and could enjoy being an excellent teacher. Looking back now at my undergraduate courses, I feel that most of my teachers used their authority to control what I thought and control what I learned. I let them, since it was still important to be accepted, especially by people who I thought were smarter than I. Then I met a single teacher who wanted to hear my voice, my authentic voice. It was so freeing. I finally realized that my thoughts were important, and that I was the most important part in my learning. I began believing in myself and began trusting my own thoughts and feelings. A new phase began for me, a time when I began to learn about me.

I continue to seek those who help me develop my voice, those who will listen to, understand and accept my voice, a voice that is continually changing and developing. Sometimes I am silenced again when I find myself in the presence of those who use their authority in ways that are intimidating and oppressive. Sometimes I am silenced by certain stressful situations that come up for me. Now, I know I have many supporters, those who I can talk to, who can help me speak. I feel accepted when I am "deeply heard", when there is "moistness in [my] eyes" (Rogers, 1969, p.224). It is still very important that I get approval from my family. Now, however, I come from a place of strength where I formulate and evaluate my own actions, thoughts and conceptions, continually keeping in mind what is best for me.

The Need to Create

What do you want from me?
What do you expect to see?
Where will this lead?
What do you need?
Who will be involved in this?
Who will you miss?
Why do you want to spend your time?
You know you'll not make a dime!
Be clear about what you are looking to do
And remain faithful to those who are doing it too.
Think carefully and deliberately
In developing your purpose thoroughly.

In this research project, it was very important for me to listen to the voices of young women who, perhaps, were fighting with others, or struggling to maintain their voices, to find the power their voices hold. I wanted to be a supporter in their development. I wanted to make connections with them and learn about what they really wanted to say. I wanted them to make connections with their peers and also with a caring adult. I wanted them to know they will be heard. I wanted them to feel comfortable in their expression and to know that what they made sense of was important to their development of self and voice. As Bateson (1989) explained,

> Building and sustaining the settings in which individuals can grow and unfold, not "kept in their place" but empowered to become all they can be, is not only the task of parents and teachers, but the basis of management and political leadership - and simple friendship. (p. 56)

One way to help the voices emerge was to provide a place to start where these young women could come to trust their environment. I believed that reading literature would help create such a place. This was where I made connections. In my youth I had no one with whom to share these connections. With no opportunity to share, I thought I was alone in what I thought. By using literature I hoped to encourage the voices of adolescent women to explore and discover their connections in a safe environment with others. In so doing, I was interested in creating new opportunities and connections so these young women would learn how to support each other and learn how to seek support when they needed it. "Peers are able to communicate meaningfully with one another and to provide support in situations requiring a judicious mixture of support and good sense" (Nemiroff, 1989, p. 10).

It has been very important for me to understand my own youth, to learn about and remain active in the continuing development of my own voice, and to learn about my own learning processes. In some ways, I am still trying to make sense of the anger of my adolescence and the conformity and silence of my early adulthood through the stories I tell and retell. Also, in recent years, it has become very important for me to learn to be an open and supportive teacher, to help students feel good about themselves and to provide a space where they feel safe enough to let their voices be heard. When I take care of this need I feel fulfilled and content, elated and delighted that I have indeed made a difference. In many ways my research is a continuation of telling and retelling my stories, not only for my own growth but also to make spaces for other young women. To quote a line in a creed by an author unknown to me, "The purpose of life is to matter - to count, to stand for something, to have it make some difference that we lived at all."

In this study I documented the journey the young women and I took as we got to know each other in the new relationships, with a "passionate realness" (Rogers, 1969, p. 107). In so doing I was interested, primarily, in developing a safe space for these women to talk and learn about themselves and others. I listened closely to the unspoken as well as the spoken; I wanted to hear what they were saying as well as what they weren't.

The primary purposes of the research were twofold. The first was to create a safe environment for a small group of adolescent women to explore their voices, to tell their stories, where they would learn to be supported and to learn to support others. As Bach (1993) expressed, "It is my hope that we will continue to break the silence of our lives and create safe public spaces in which to tell our stories; space that will describe and explain human life from multiple perspectives" (p. 11). The second purpose for the research was to develop my own sensitivity as a teacher, to find ways to support and challenge adolescent women in their development and discovery of voice. I followed the advice of Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule (1986) to help these young women develop their authentic voices by encouraging "connection over separation, understanding and acceptance over assessment, and collaboration over debate"; I set out to "accord respect to and allow time for the knowledge that emerge[d] from firsthand experience" and encouraged the young women "to evolve their own patterns of work based on the problems they

[were] pursuing" (p. 229). I believed that by "supporting and validating" each young woman in her development of "a sense of competence in her own abilities, independent of the praise of others" and in helping "her identify and value her inner experiences, her wishes, tastes, reactions, her very selfhood will serve her well in formulating who she uniquely will come to be" (Josselson, 1987, p. 188).

Chapter 2

ATTENDING TO THE LITERATURE

As I squeeze my clay
As I warm it with my hands
My energy, my feelings, my thoughts
Get embedded in this sometimes soft, sometimes hard
Substance
What will evolve, in this space, in this time
Will depend on how I get to know my clay
And how it gets to know me
I seek to encircle it with my hands
And press upon its softness
I marvel in how it takes the shape of my hand,
Marvel in how each crack and line is left behind
But startled that I can also see each cut and scar,
I must get to know my clay, and come to trust it
And come to care and respect it
So that, in turn, it will evolve as it should.

In order to maintain my integrity in this research, where my "sense of integrity appears to be entwined with an ethic of care" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 171), I needed to do a number of things. It was very important for me to stay focused on the major purpose of this project, that is, the empowerment of a small group of young women. Over the course of my study I sought the input of these women; sought to listen to their voices and to be in relationship with them; sought to respect and remain faithful to them; and sought to interact "as a direct response to individuals with whom one is in relation" (Noddings, 1986, p. 497). I wanted to help them identify their own problems in order to "arouse in the learner an active quest for information and for production of new ideas" and to help them ask new questions (Dewey, 1938, p. 79). I did not want them to be my 'clay' since I did not want to manipulate them. I wanted to help them make sense of their experiences and to help them find and/or maintain their personal power. Hogan (1988, p. 13) summed this up for me when she wrote

> Power isn't given by one person to another. It develops in the context of a relationship. Empowering relationships develop over time and it takes time for participants to recognize the value that the relationship holds. Empowering relationships involve feelings of 'connectedness' that are developed in situations of equality, caring and mutual purpose and intention.

The 'clay' I referred to is the substance that is expressed in this thesis, and evolved as a collaboration, "a mutually constructed story created out of the lives of both researcher and participants[s]" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 12).

In the next section I turn to the literature to explore what has been written about adolescent women and empowerment. I am interested in "a voice of integration" where I will "find a place for reason *and* intuition *and* the expertise of others" (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986, p. 133). Because I am a 'constructivist,' the literature will inform my own developing knowledge. The voice of my experience shows my context, and can be very different from the voices of the literature. In the stories and text that follows these two voices will be indicated by the style of print, where my voice will remain as it is shown here and where the voices of the literature will be bold and indented within the text.

Adolescent Women

What do I say?　　*Where do I go?*
Get away from me, you bother me!　　*What a jerk!*
Where are you going?　　*Can I come?*
What's his name and is he nice?　　*I want to be with you.*
You make me feel important.　　*Call me sometime.*
I get lonely. I isolate myself.
I feel powerful, don't touch me.　　*Leave me alone.*
Listen to me.

The stories of my adolescence are filled with anxiety, anger and uncertainty. Mostly I was unsure about my capabilities and where I fit, so I think I just coasted, not getting involved in a lot. I had no passion or enthusiasm for any one thing, and I have, at this time, no clear understanding of the reasons. I saw myself as a passive recipient of the world around me. I was waiting for things to happen to me rather than making them happen for me, since I was uncertain of my influence on myself and others. I did not believe in my own authority, since I thought that others knew more than I. I also did not seek situations that contained any conflict; for the most part, I remained passive and I removed myself from anything that may have involved me in compromising circumstances, where there was a possibility that my ignorance might be discovered.

I chose to believe more in outside authority than anything I might think or construct. By believing only in outside authority I did not have any desire to learn about myself, since I believe I was unable to think for myself. Not until I began believing in myself as an authority did I begin learning about my world, about other people, and probably most importantly, about myself.

During my adolescence I had few aspirations and dreams about my future. I thought that expressing creativity was something restricted to my art classes, an option in my second year of high school. I believe this conception contributed to how I saw my future stories. Any type of future I saw for myself was fragmented and included familiar scenarios, nothing that was at all foreign to me, nothing that really involved any creativity. These familiar scenarios were safe and quite predictable. However, none of these scenarios were very exciting or challenging, since I had little faith in myself as my own authority and creator of my destiny.

> **Today's young women seem to have a lot more to think and worry about (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 1991; Kostash, 1987; Baker, 1985). According to A Cappella, a study conducted in 1990 to listen to groups of adolescent women about their experiences and concerns, "young women worry about those they are close to, their schoolwork, jobs, relationships and world events." They are also concerned about "future planning, the need to make career choices and the crises and dangers they and their friends are exposed to" as well as their "popularity, their appearance [and] school events," (p. 18). This is also a time when they "are in danger of losing their voices and thus losing connection with others, and also a time when girls, gaining voice and knowledge, are in danger of knowing the unseen and speaking the unspoken and thus losing connection with what is commonly taken to be 'reality' " (Gilligan, 1989, p. 25).**
>
> **Griffin (in Taylor, 1989) conducted a study in England that indicated that 'typical girls' "experienced strong pressures to get a boyfriend and to get married, most saw marriage and motherhood as distant but inevitable events" seeing "their future employment being shaped by child care and domestic responsibilities" (p. 442).**

Their Families

A young woman, so polite and so calm on the outside
Runs away from her family inside of her head
She wants it to be different;
But will she ever get it? Her experience is so different;
"What is it like to have a dad who seeks to see his only daughter? I don't know," the young woman responds.
"What is it like to have a dad who has never been to jail?"
She pretends that it doesn't bother her
She pretends that she doesn't need him
She lies to herself to protect her fragile esteem
"It's okay," she rationalizes.
She traps herself in her own prison,
A person where her past experiences are the bars

Where her esteem is her walls.
She will make it out of her prison, she thinks
"It will be different for me when I grow up?" she thinks.
But will it really?
The dreams in her head keep her going, keep her striving
To create a future with different pictures,
Pictures that have evolved in her head ...

I look at this world as a middle girl in a family with two sisters. My perspective is that of a middle child in a family where both of my parents worked very hard. During most of my childhood we lived on a farm in rural Alberta. Besides having many responsibilities on the farm, my dad also worked at other jobs to supplement the income and my mom, being the primary caregiver, worked in the home to provide us with meals and to take care of our other basic needs. She also spent much time growing many of our vegetables in a huge garden and used much energy in raising chickens and milking cows. My sisters and I also had many responsibilities in our family, such as helping prepare meals and taking care of the animals.

Even though a farm may be a bit isolating, especially for a teenager, I was allowed a lot of freedom during my childhood. In many ways, however, I was quite sheltered from the realities of our world, such as starvation, child prostitution, and incest. Now, as an adult, I realize how truly unique each family is and how much families can differ. I really did not have such a perspective as an adolescent; it really did not matter to my life.

> **Families can take many forms, so members are all unique. Even members of the same families have very different experiences, according to a variety of factors such as birth order, gender, and genetic makeup. Richardson & Richardson (1990) claimed that "people in a family change in many ways between the birth of each child. Their physical circumstances are different, their emotional life is different, and the world around them is different ... each child is treated in a different way by parents and siblings, usually unintentionally" (p. 3).**
>
> **Regarding family ties, research indicated (Kostash, 1987; Canadian Teachers' Federation, 1992) that adolescent women are connected more, whether "passionate or hurtful" with their mothers than their fathers, who are "considerably cooler, even remote" (Kostash, 1987). Some researchers found that in needing to maintain like-gender connections to form an identity, young women usually only partially separate from their mothers (Josselson, 1987; Gilligan, 1982).**

Of course, just by being an adolescent almost twenty years ago in a rural area gives me a very different experience than I would have today. Economically, in the early to mid-seventies, jobs were relatively easy to find and living on a farm then meant much security. The young women who chose to participate in this project did not have the same context, since this research took place in an urban school fifteen years later, in a very different world.

Their Schools

Which class is this?
What was I supposed to bring today?
Do you know?
Why not?
What's this teacher like?
Can she be trusted?
Don't say too much, it might hurt!
What did you get on your test?
It doesn't matter, or does it
This is boring, why do we have to sit here
In this space, in somebody else's space
Where I learn what is important to others
And not to me?

I do not have many memories of school. Many of those I have are not good ones. For the most part, my school experiences were not very special. I was never an "excellent student." Being studious and the teachers' pet were not my experiences. I think I tried to have those experiences but they never happened. I am not really sure why though. The stories I do remember of my schooling come back to me in bits and pieces. Most of them, unfortunately, are the stories where things did not turn out well for me or for others. An example of this is when a boy punched me in the stomach when I was nine, and when, four years later, most of the girls in my classroom chased this bully home, by throwing rocks and insults at him. Other stories of my peers are stories about the exclusion of students who didn't quite fit in. There were other stories as well, those about the frog I saved from the boys who were throwing it at the girls and about the time when I became "Queen of Hearts" in a school talent competition for girls.

The stories I tell about the adults in my schooling experiences are varied. There were adults for whom I grew to care, such as the principal when I was in grade nine, who would often have arm wrestles with a very strong boy in my class. The principal won only half of the time. He was 'neat' and I enjoyed the times he was 'human' with us. However, there were also stories of the adults who were not respectful of all students in the class. They treated some differently than others, in a disrespectful sort of way. I can remember being very disrespectful towards these teachers and even getting "into trouble" while in their classes. I am not really sure why that was but I think I had a problem with the power these people apparently needed. This was "not the kind of power I respect, not the kind of power that sets anybody free" (Le Guin, 1986, p. 157).

In reflecting upon the unusual experiences I or other students had, I continue to wonder why we were forbidden to talk openly about some things. I believe that if we had talked about them there might have been more openness to these issues. Some topics like alcohol, drug use and abuse, teen pregnancy and physical, sexual, or emotional abuse were not discussed. During my high school years I was never really attracted to those people who experimented with illegal drugs. However, I did experiment with the legal ones, like alcohol and cigarettes. At weekend parties and dances these drugs were widely used and abused. It seemed quite natural to just drink as much as we could. No one that I knew questioned this type of abuse or why the young adults here drank so much.

Sexuality was something no one talked about in school. It was one of those forbidden words not spoken about in any context, not even in sex education. I remember the girls from two or three classrooms gathering on the school stage for a film. A very brief conversation about what we saw followed it. I cannot remember the word 'sex' as part of the film, let alone of the conversation. The only time I can remember using that word was when I referred to the sex of a person or animal. As for teenage pregnancy, the conservative atmosphere in which I was immersed did not allow for the openness that was needed. The few pregnancies I was aware of were not spoken about, only secretive innuendoes and private gossiping helped me figure out what was going on.

> **Fine's (1988) statement about sex education in the 1950s in the United States reflected what I recall about my experience in my school in rural Alberta in the early 1970s. She stated "in the 1950s public school health classes separated girls from boys. Girls 'learned about sex' by watching films of the accelerated development of breasts and hips, the flow of menstrual blood, and then the progression of venereal disease as a result of participation in out-of-wedlock heterosexual activity" (pp. 40-41).**
>
> **Even recently Fine (1988) observed, in a high school in which she completed her study and in others she had contacted, that there was "a systematic refusal to name issues, particularly issues that caused adults discomfort. Educators often projected their discomfort onto students in the guise of 'protecting' them" (p. 38).**

As for experiencing the curriculum, I fail to remember much of it, since the stories I tell of my schooling deal with the people with whom I came into contact day to day. I can recall some of my literature, math and social studies classes, but these stories also are remembered because of the people who were in these classes, because of the successes, the laughter, the criticisms and the tears. The people who impacted me positively and negatively are the ones I remember the most.

Nothing, unfortunately, that I can remember impassioned me, unless I include my successes in math. Even though I do have a few stories I like retelling, these were not enough to help me become an enthusiastic learner and member of a classroom community.

I initially became aware of gender issues early in my teens. I remember all the generic 'he's, and hearing from my teachers that it meant boys and girls. For a few years after that I would justify the use of 'he' but I never really felt comfortable. After that, I became increasingly aware of the stereotyping and the sexism that permeated almost everything. For the most part, I was able to justify people's sexist remarks or stereotyping based on gender. In my high school experience, biology, and especially chemistry and physics, attracted more boys than girls. Many 'business' classes, especially word processing and typing, were filled only with girls. It even seemed odd when there were boys in these classes, since the girls clearly dominated in numbers.

That the sciences attract more boys than girls remains the case today according to a study completed for the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women. It affirmed that "courses are often informally or implicitly seen as inappropriate for one sex or the other by students, teachers, or guidance counselors" (Baker, 1985, p. 18). According to the AAUW report (1992) "material on women comprised no more than 1 percent of any text, and that women's lives were trivialized, distorted, or omitted altogether" in a 1971 study. Studies in the late 1980s indicated that "although sexism has decreased in some elementary school texts and basal readers, the problems persist, especially at the secondary school level, in terms of what is considered important enough to study" (p. 62). As for the language in texts, almost all publishers of textbooks, apparently, have guidelines for nonsexist language. However, these are just guidelines and some publishers do not insist the authors use them.

Cathy Nelson (in AAUW, 1992), a teacher educator, believed that because subtle negative messages are given to school students that men's lives are worth more than women's, girls' self-esteem drops as they go through school. Research has indicated (AAUW, 1992) that male students receive more and different attention from their teachers than female students do. Studies revealed that boys are more likely to be asked to answer questions and to receive more precise comments from their teachers.

What does my hair look like? Do you like it?
Am I as pretty as that girl over there?
Do you think that guy is cute?
It's important what you think of me,
I am your friend and you are mine
When will I see you next?
Will you call me?
Can you come to my party?
It'll be lots of fun.
I hope you can come,
I miss you.

I always wanted a best friend, and at times I had one. We would laugh and giggle, sometimes I thought we would never stop. We would talk about other students or just talk about the boys to whom we were attracted. Sometimes we would have swearing contests. It was fun to experiment with voices we were not supposed to have. We would laugh so hard.

The connections I made with any others were fairly superficial ones, when I think of them now. It wasn't that I didn't try. I guess I just was unaware of how relationships worked. I was unaware I needed to work at sustaining relationships. I tried to be as nice as I knew how, but it never really impressed anyone.

I don't think I was ever involved in a clique. Perhaps I did not want to be associated with one. Then again, there are a number of meanings of cliques, and I guess it means to me, that a person could only belong to a particular group if they believed or did certain things. The girls I spent time with were nice to me and to each other. I remember very little gossiping and they did not seem to have a problem when we would choose other friends.

There were some boys with whom I was friends but, like the relationships with the girls, they were fairly superficial. The relationships with the boys felt a bit different from the relationships with the girls. It felt special to be just friends with someone of the opposite sex and to experience relationships in a slightly different way.

For the most part, I maintained my personal power and did not feel pressured by my friends. I think I was very fortunate to be involved with friends who did not pressure me into doing anything I didn't want to do. The girls I called my friends seemed quite respectful of others. I still feel a bit guilty, however, that I failed to defend those girls and boys who were considered a bit different, for whatever reason, from the rest of us. These classmates were teased, ridiculed, and excluded. I was never willing to openly defend them for fear of criticism from the rest. I am sorry I didn't do it anyway.

> Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan (1992) completed a five-year study at a private school in the USA where they listened to one hundred girls talk about what they felt and thought. In their work, they listened to the voices of the girls providing "a naturalist's rendering of the human world -- detailed accounts of what is going on in relationships" (p. 3). In the stories, these girls told about their experiences in relationships with friends and family. Most of these girls learned to silence themselves to continue their relationships with others. For example, Neeti, at twelve, said, "It's really rude to be mean" and "I just smile all the time" (p. 196) because she was very concerned about not hurting others' feelings. She chose to move "out of relationship with herself and into relationship with an image of herself that other people respond to and seem to desire or value - one that she herself has come to see as nicer or safer" (p. 197). Like Neeti, "Judy, struggling not to be rude and selfish but also to be honest, now finds herself caught between conventions of nice behavior and her real feelings, a place where truth, again, becomes slippery" (p. 132). Others (Steiner-Adair, 1990; Josselson, 1987) emphasized that while males' experience of separation and autonomy fosters identity development, female identity is formed by connection with others.

Their Extracurricular Activities

Because I came from a farming community, extracurricular activities were quite rare. Very few people in my class were involved, especially before they were able to drive themselves to the event. Before high school I was only involved in piano lessons, which were quite isolating, and a sewing club that involved a dozen or so girls about my age. In high school, I joined the volleyball team and played badminton with a boy my age. These activities did not take much commitment. I don't think I was willing to be involved at all costs.

> According to the AAUW Report (1992), 1987 figures indicated that about 26% of the female school population in the United States participated in secondary school athletics. Even though this number has dramatically increased from 4% in 1972, young women's participation remains only half of young men's participation in school athletics. Part of the problem, as indicated in the report, is that the number of female role models in athletics was still greatly lacking, and, in fact, was decreasing. According to another study (Baker, 1985) at least two thirds of adolescents interviewed were involved in at least one extracurricular activity. These activities varied according to the education, income of the family, and their family background.

Other activities outside of school or home were the local dances and parties I would attend after I was old enough to drive my sister and myself with the family car.

The anger seethes through
They don't need anyone except each other
Except Motley Crüe and their imitators
They look tough
With leather from head to toe
With the thorny studs in shapes of
Swords, skulls, or guns
And other symbols only they understand
The young women, the objects of men's desire
Dressed as seductresses
Submit to the power of this culture.

Multi-cultural differences, differences in color or race, were not issues where I went to school. For the most part, white Anglo-Saxon students filled the classrooms of the schools I attended. The noticeable school groups were based mainly on gender and cliques. For me gender was not a big issue back then. I guess I really didn't understand all that was involved. What I can remember is that our responsibilities were given to us on the basis of gender. For example, the boys were asked to move furniture while the girls would take over the house-keeping duties such as sweeping and cleaning.

> **The AAUW report (1992) stated that "by the time they are six or seven, children have clear ideas about gender, based on what they see in the world around them, and both girls and boys strive for conformity with gender-stereotyped roles" (p. 10). Paley (1984) explained that at the age of four, children are more likely to take on the roles that are considered to be stereotypical. Girls, for the most part, play with dolls, and boys feel less comfortable in the doll corner and would rather be super heroes.**

There were other structures I did not really notice, that is, the hierarchical, male-dominated ones. It was unfortunate for my classmates and me that we had no female role models involved in the administration of a school. The men who were my principals and assistant principals seemed capable enough. It would, I believe, have benefited everyone if the other sex had been represented in administrative positions. When I think back now at the models available to me, they were, for the most part, very traditional. Women and men did work considered appropriate according to their sex.

> **Even today's proportion of male to female administrators remains very inequitable. According to an AAUW study (1992), which quoted the American Association of School Administrators *Women and Minorities in School***

> ***Administration: Facts and Figures 1989-90,*** **the percentage of male principals to female principals is 72.3 to 27.7% and male superintendents to female superintendents is 95.2 to 4.8% (these percentages include all states except those which do not report according to sex and race).**

☙❧ *Preparing the Tools* ☙ *Empowerment* ☙❧

"But I don't care cause sometimes, I said sometimes I hear my voice and it's been HERE silent all these years"

- Tori Amos (1991)

In preparation for this research project, I looked back on my own sense of empowerment, a sense begun only five years ago. I reflected on the events and people which had the most impact on me. I thought about my context at the time and how the other people in my life let me talk about my process. I also thought of those times when authority figures used their power to take my power away, times when I felt helpless and powerless. I continued to struggle with how being accountable for my own feelings and thoughts interfered with the powerless feelings I had in the presence of those 'power mongers,' where I felt I had to surrender my personal power and conform to their ideas and values. However, when I silenced myself for these reasons, I felt resentful and angry. I showed my frustration in ways that did not help me take my power back.

> **Taylor (1989) defined empowerment broadly in this context as helping girls and young women move "towards a critical understanding of the structures of domination affecting their lives in order that they might be challenged" (p. 446). She added that "the key to empowerment lies in the development of a sense of *social* or *collective* identity as girls or young women - rather than merely the development of a sense of identity as an *individual* ... it seems important to help girls and young women to develop a strong sense of identity of themselves *as women* by exploration of personal experiences and life histories of women" (p. 448).**

I also recalled the conflicts I had with students when I began teaching. I tried to sort through the feelings I had when I felt pressured by the structure of the institution and the expectations of those who used that structure to 'control' students. The conflict that occurred within me ended when I learned that I could only have control of myself, and, instead of trying to control students, I focused on learning to be in relationship with my students. I learned to "be" a "real person." In being who and what I am, I enter "into a relationship with the learner without presenting a front or a facade"; I am able to "live" my feelings and "communicate them if appropriate" (Rogers, 1969, p. 106).

In this collaborative project I vowed to remain open, trusting, and authentic with these five young women in order to move to a place where relationships may develop, where the goal is "connected empowerment" (Davies, 1988). In doing so, I was certain that I would learn more about being in relationship with young women, and hoped these young women would feel safe in exploring their authentic voices.

Brown & Gilligan (1992) reaffirmed how important it was that the women and the girls involved in their study learned about each other by being in relationship. They:

> Offer a vision of women and girls dancing at the crossroads of adolescence, moving in relation to one another so that it becomes possible for girls and women to stay in relationship and to say what they know. In our interviews, we found that when women moved with girls, girls brought themselves into relationship with women and began to speak openly rather than trying to be good or bad girls. Women, coming into relationship with girls, became noticeably more radical - quicker to spot false voices and also to differentiate between real and idealized relationships. Thus a new kind of dance began between girls and women. (p. 219)

A project entitled A Cappella: The Realities, Concerns, Expectations and Barriers Experienced by Adolescent Women in Canada conducted in 1990, helped empower young women by allowing them a voice and impacted their teachers as well. "Teachers told us that really listening to girls talk about their lives had enormous professional and personal impact. Months later, student groups ... [were] still meeting weekly with their teachers. Girls need to be heard" (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 1991, p. iii).

"Girls use drugs, drop out or don't practice safe sex for reasons we just aren't addressing," according to Heather-Jane Robertson, Director of Professional Development Services. "We have to deal with the underlying factors: feelings of powerlessness, depression, fear of violence, cynicism and neglect. Only then will we have an impact on the lives of young women" (Canadian Teachers' Federation, 1991, pp. iii-iv). According to Brown & Gilligan (1992) many young women will not express their authentic feelings and thoughts for fear of "losing their relationships and finding themselves powerless and all alone." When they did express authentic feelings and thoughts, they were seen as "selfish," "rude" or "mean" (p. 217).

Taylor (1989) suggested that empowerment will be most successful if we

> Work *with* girls and young women and help them to reflect critically on their own lives and futures ... We need to encourage girls to explore and to discuss with each other the contradictions and pressures they face. Their concerns should not be dismissed as unimportant and irrelevant to a concern about future careers. It is also important that teachers and others working with

> **young women are aware of the conflicts discussed ... [where] collectivity in girls and young women [is encouraged]. (p. 449)**

Reading and Responding

> *"Yes, it's red," she said resignedly. "Now you see why I can't be perfectly happy. Nobody could who had red hair. I don't mind the other things so much - freckles and the green eyes and my skinniness. I can imagine them away. I can imagine that I have a beautiful rose-complexion and lovely starry violet eyes. But I cannot imagine that red hair away. I do my best. I think to myself, 'Now my hair is a glorious black, black as the raven's wing.' But all the time to know it is just plain red, and it breaks my heart. It will be my lifelong sorrow. I read of a girl once in a novel who had a lifelong sorrow, but it wasn't red hair. Her hair was pure gold rippling back from her alabaster brow. What is an alabaster brow? I never could find out. Can you tell me?*
>
> 'Anne Shirley' from L. M. Montgomery Anne of Green Gables (p. 18)

When I look back at my connections, I remember how the worlds of the people I read about in fiction were so fascinating. I wanted to escape my world, to enter those worlds that were very foreign and exciting. The stories I remember the most were stories I chose to read during my spare time. I remember I connected with the strong characters, characters who started out with great disadvantages. Those like Anne Shirley of Anne of Green Gables, Helen Keller, and Bilbo Baggins of The Hobbit were characters I wished I was similar to. I saw them as very brave, but I never thought I could be like them.

> **Winning (1990b) explained that the fundamental aspects of the lived experiences of four twelve-year-old girls regarding reading are 'intentionality' (working at concentrating), 'bodily being' (the reader feels as if he or she is a part of the story), the 'social world' (the reader is in relationship with the characters in the story) and 'temporality' (the reader has time to reflect on the text at any time).**

In preparing for choosing material to read for this research I reviewed some literature about response to reading, books adolescent women choose to read and some ways women are portrayed in literature (Christian-Smith, 1990; Cooper, 1985; Donelson & Nilsen, 1989; Rudman, 1984). My intention for the reading in this research was to have these young women connect in ways that would help in the initiation of conversation and would help them make sense of issues, dilemmas and problems in their lives. The intention was to make a collaborative decision with the young women involved to help shape the study. It was important that I was prepared to listen to their voices, to remain faithful to them and the research. Because I did not know what they would choose, a variety of research on the topic of adolescent reading was reviewed before the beginning of the study.

Readers do not just passively receive the text nor are they just "distanced spectators", but they are also participants who "draw on their individual past experiences of language and of life to provide the raw materials for this new experience" (Rosenblatt, 1985, p. 39). Apple (in Christian-Smith, 1990) reaffirmed that "readers do not passively take in the ideological meanings that are supposedly there for all to see. Rather, readers help *construct* the text" (p. xi). It is important to choose texts that will foster "efferent and aesthetic" reading (Rosenblatt, 1985) where "in *efferent* (non aesthetic) reading, the readers' attention is centered on what should be retained as a residue *after* the actual reading-event" (p. 37) and where "in the *aesthetic transaction*, the reader's attention is focused on *what he* [or she] *is living through during the reading-event*" (p. 38).

Because "the most frequently mentioned reading material for girls was romantic novels (such as Harlequin romances) and teen magazines" according to Baker (1985, p. 107), I believed this would probably be a choice of the young women involved in the research. Gambell (1986) reported that in early adolescence the mystery-adventure stories are most popular. In the next stage, most adolescents chose stories that deal with "school life, family relations, and problems of adolescent life such as drugs, sex, alcoholism" (p. 134).

Many parents and teachers, concerned about the reading material of young women, criticize romance novels because of the sexual stereotypes most seem to sustain. "For woven throughout teen romance fiction's saga of hearts and flowers is an accompanying discourse that a woman is incomplete without a man, that motherhood is women's destiny, and that a woman's rightful place is at home" (Christian-Smith, 1990, p. 2). Christian-Smith also asserted that "romance reading does not alter the girls' present and future circumstances, but rather is deeply implicated in reconciling them to their place in the world" (pp. 134-135). Romance novels are not, however, the only types of literature that contain sexual stereotyping, where "normal" girls are "interested in dolls and clothing, [and are] passive, obedient, graceful and conventionally pretty" (Rudman, 1984, p. 105).

Because girls will read these materials regardless of the opposition, Christian-Smith (1990) believed "that the reflective aspect of romance reading may provide a meeting ground between readers, teachers and parents for constructively approaching these novels." She suggested using "strategies [that] are designed to develop 'reader communities' where readers collectively read and respond" and

> **"strategies [that] can also be used by individual readers when reading at home" (p. 136).**

I regret never interacting with other readers and thinkers about what I read, at school or at home. The few exchanges I had were very superficial ones about the plot or characters, but not about what I really connected with and about the questions I had about issues or dilemmas. Nor did I have the opportunity to share my own stories with anyone else.

> **Petrosky (1985) explained that "responses to texts ... are influenced by many other things. Personality, mental abilities, past experiences, expectations, symbolizing, and language all play major roles in readers' responses just as they do in our responses to the people, situations, and objects in our lives" (p. 71). Beach (1985) more specifically stated that "differences in age, reading ability, prior knowledge, social experiences, attitudes, personality, 'identity style,' needs, purpose for reading, level of cognitive development, cognitive flexibility, level of moral purpose for reading *all* influence response" (p. 122). He expressed that the "differences in texts' difficulty, complexity, depth, quality, predictability, evocativeness, subject matter, tone, attitude, and historical period" also influence the response (p. 123). The inferences made about the situations, ideas and characters in the text will be determined by the prior or tacit knowledge of the reader. Beach (1985) explained that "readers differ in their ability to make (these) inferences because they bring different background knowledge of discourse conventions to their reading" (p. 103). Since "one does not acquire a tacit knowledge of these [discourse conventions] overnight ... the readers are continually acquiring discourse and literary experiences" with every new discourse experience (p. 105).**

During the research I was prepared to ask these young women to respond in varying ways. Talking in a group was to prevail as the primary mode of responding. In this mode it was important to remember that every voice in the community needed to be heard and that the members of this community were to feel safe in expressing their thoughts and feelings, their stories and anecdotes.

> **As Le Guin (1986) in a commencement address expressed, "it's often easier for women to trust one another to try to speak our experience in our language, the language we talk to each other in, the mother tongue; so we empower one another" (p. 151). Other possible modes of responding were letter writing, journal writing and paired sharing. Graves (1989) explained that letter writing provides "a good foundation for thinking in another genre" where the language used tends to be "much more personal" than reading logs and carries "good information about their books" (p. 778). Journal writing also offers another form where writers can think,**

communicate and solve problems (Fulwiler, 1982; 1987). Personal journals can be used to clarify one's own "belief system" as well as for the purposes of "self-discovery", "values clarification", "self examination" and "personal insights" (Fulwiler, 1982, p. 25). Dialogue journals contain "a genuine conversation", are "interactive" and "functional" and are used "for the purposes of communication, self-understanding, negotiation of the (classroom) relationship and problem solving" (Staton, 1987, p. 49). Team journals may also be used in the "exchange of energy and ideas" (Graybeal, 1987, p. 308). Deciding on the type or types of journal(s) to use will depend on what we feel will encourage us to "express honestly [our] personal opinions, take some risks with [our] thoughts, and [write] in [our] own natural voices" (Fulwiler, 1987, p. 5).

I expected that these young women would use a narrative voice, such as I have done thus far, since "humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). To stay faithful to the collaboration it was important that all members of the group discuss the forms of responding and the values of each and then decide which ones would be the most appropriate for the group and for each individual. To capture the voices during the discussions I was prepared to use a tape recorder.

Beach (1985) cautioned researchers concerning response formats. For example, he claimed that "written format fosters more interpretative responses and a taped/oral format fosters more engagement/autobiographical responses" (p. 124).

Creating an atmosphere conducive to exploring and developing voice is an important consideration. A student who trusts that he or she can continue "to voice her or his concerns and beliefs, with the interest of classmates and teacher and without fear of interruption or belittlement ... becomes a better listener as well as a more frequent and thoughtful participant" (Abrams, 1981, p. ix). Getting the participants actively involved in the research project by explaining the aims and helping with planning will benefit the whole experience (Taylor, 1989; Dewey, 1938).

Winning (1990a) emphasized that a "community feeling requires a special space - a space separated from the possible alienation of the outer world beyond" (p. 15). She expressed that "feeling a part of the population ... means sensing one's own contribution to the direction and purpose of the whole group" (p. 16). It is a "reciprocal relationship" where the members respond to one another and learn from each other. "Community is somewhere to learn and to grow; it reaches out and it brings in. Community is somewhere like home - somewhere from which we can begin and to which we can return" (p. 18).

Anticipation

I was anxious about beginning the 'sculpture' with my 'co-creators.' I looked forward to beginning new relationships with these young women, but I had some mixed feelings. My anxiety appeared when I thought about how this research was all my idea and that I was the one who wanted this experience. I had not included these partners of mine in the initial process. But my integrity called upon me to use all my knowing "in sharing and interpreting our feelings and situations and our strategies to improve women's lot" so that each of us becomes "empowered by the fact that, throughout this process" we will move "from being consumers of knowledge to being creators of knowledge" (Nemiroff, 1989, p. 10). I came to this research with "an ethic that had fidelity to persons and the quality of relations at its heart" (Noddings, 1986, p. 498).

> When I come out wearing no armour, making no effort to be different from what I am, I learn so much more - even from criticism and hostility - and I am so much more relaxed, and I get so much closer to people. Besides, my willingness to be vulnerable brings forth so much more real feeling from other people who are in relationship to me, that is very rewarding. So I enjoy life *much* more when I am not defensive, not hiding behind a facade, just trying to be and express the real me. (Rogers, 1969, p. 228)

No doubt, I was prepared to come away from this research changed by the stories of these young women and the "collaborative stories" we created together (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). By preparing myself to be in relationship with these young women, I knew I would learn much about myself as well as about my co-creators and my clay. Because these young women were creating a new story in their lives, by being involved in creating this 'sculpture,' they were unavoidably affected as well. These new stories I heard, told, and made helped me create stories for my future. In the words of Bruner (1987), "perhaps we can say one other thing: any story one may tell about anything is better understood by considering other possible ways in which it can be told" (p. 32).

Chapter 3

THE COMPOSITION

The Meeting
I'll never forget that day
When I met you
I was so excited and nervous
To meet and impress you
I wanted you to like me
I wanted you to feel safe.

So when I imposed on your turf
Your territory
I felt humbled by so many
New faces
Staring, judging, questioning
Do they like me? I'm not sure.

So many mixed feelings
Will I fail? Do I know how to be
With these young women
Who will, I hope, choose to be with me?
What do they think
Of me and this 'research'?
I guess I'll have to wait
Only time will help me
Answer these questions.
Thanks again, Annie
Yours truly,
Val

Written on April 7, 1993, this poem was a partial response to a poem Annie, one of the young women in the group, had given to me. This is a very rough piece, written here in its original form, but the feeling I had upon writing it was a tremendous passion for getting involved with these young women.

This feeling of passion was one I yearned to have from the beginning of the research process. To experience this I needed to maintain my integrity throughout by listening to my own knowing, and allowing this thesis to unfold in a way that would honor these young women and me. This level of enthusiasm and fervor I do not often attain. I must admit, however, that there were times when this thesis seemed extremely overwhelming, times when I felt anxiety, fear and trepidation.

My feelings about the research changed over the process of the inquiry. In what follows, I describe the process and express the many feelings I had.

Thinking, Reading, Writing, Talking

In the summer of 1992 during Writing Among Teachers, a University of Alberta graduate course, I wrote about my own exploration of voice and empowerment. A piece of writing evolved which created much turmoil within me. In the writing, I made myself very vulnerable since I wanted to express things authentically and learn about myself as I proceeded. I felt that it was extremely important for me to be honest with myself and my readers. I did not want to silence myself. I remember meeting with my teacher, Pat, to go through what I had written. When I told her what I was writing and thinking about, tears welled up in my eyes. She noticed and commented on the depth of my emotional response. I cannot remember how I responded, but I knew it was a breakthrough. This had never happened to me before and I do not completely understand why it did. I believe this was related to the following excerpt in this piece of writing:

> My questions and answers are sometimes contradictory. If empowerment comes from within how can I make a difference with others? Should I just trust, trust that they will become empowered when the time is right? I think that if I had taken a different path I may not have become empowered. What then? Where would I be? Would I have become empowered anyway? Would I have found people who would have supported this growth? I'd like to think so. (Pawluk, 1993, p. 6)

Articles and books I read at the time were also related to my focus. I connected many of these readings and thoughts to my relationship with my 'Little Sister,' Suzie. I was interested in helping her become empowered but was uncertain as to how I should promote that. From learning about my own developing voice and my personal power, compounded by the desire to help Suzie, I longed to examine how young women came to their own empowerment and I craved to know how I could aid in that development. I was and remain interested in experiences that help me understand this complex and sometimes long and difficult process.

In September of 1992, Jean, my advisor, asked me to begin thinking about my thesis topic. We talked about what I was interested in and also about the piece of writing that had affected me so greatly. At that time I was very concerned about Suzie, who was not attending school regularly. As we talked, I began to understand this as the most important issue for me at the time. I was genuinely interested in the subject and knew that my passion lay in learning more about the empowerment of others. I began getting excited about developing a proposal and began reading more about young women, empowerment, feminism, and voice.

In November, I developed a rough sketch of my proposal. I was clear about working with young women between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. I contacted an acquaintance, a teacher at an 'inner-city' elementary and junior high school. This initial contact was at least two months prior to the anticipated start-up date of the research. I was interested in preparing this far in advance to give myself time to find another school or contact person if that was what was necessary. It was extremely important for me to work with a teacher who would be supportive of my project. I wanted to be able to do what I felt was important, rather than being influenced in a way that would not honor my intentions.

Because I did not know Mr. Jones (a pseudonym) very well, I was quite anxious about our first contact. Because I had talked with him previously about educational issues, I believed he would support this project. However, I was not certain about his stance and I did not know if he had other commitments that might prevent him from agreeing to participate. Our first contact was by telephone and I was relieved that he agreed to support the project. He did, however, indicate I could not start before Christmas since he had other commitments. At this point, I was delighted that my search for a teacher to support the research was over.

Presenting to the Community

Within the next two months, I read related material and wrote the proposal. As well, I prepared for its presentation to the Department of Elementary Education at the University of Alberta. Family, friends and colleagues supported this project and encouraged me to pursue this topic. I was grateful for my friends and co-workers at the Centre for Research for Teacher Education and Development in helping me prepare for my proposal presentation. On January 28, 1993, they listened to my practice presentation, asked thought-provoking questions that helped me become clearer about my research and, most importantly, they helped me celebrate this piece of writing that meant so much to me. I felt very lucky and honored to have such a caring and supportive community that would help me find my way through this process.

The next day, (January 29) I delivered the proposal to Mr. Jones. I wanted him to know exactly what I had planned. On February 2, 1993, I presented my proposal to the department. After its acceptance, I submitted a summary, filled out a department ethics review form and later applied officially to the school board involved. I began preparing for my first meeting with the group of girls. Within three weeks I had received 'permission' from the school board. I was on my way.

Preparing to Proceed

Mr. Jones was teaching language arts to a class of grade nine students, eleven young women and fifteen young men. He wanted me to consider many things in preparation. He made it clear these students were not 'typical' inner-city students. They were from many ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. They were, for the most part, immigrants from countries such as Vietnam, Poland, Iraq, El Salvador, Ghana, Philippines and Chile. It was important to him that I did not categorize nor prejudge them. Throughout the research Mr. Jones remained very supportive. He agreed to my presence two times per week for a combined total of approximately 160 minutes per week. The only condition he made was that the young women involved must be responsible for completing all their class assignments on time. If they fell too far behind in any assignments, they would not be allowed to join the conversation group until they had submitted incomplete assignments. He demonstrated his trust that the project was of value to the young women by not interfering in the conversations. In addition, he helped me feel part of the class and the larger school community by inviting me to extra-curricular events such as a camping trip, a theater presentation, a trip to the public library, and the June graduation. These times helped me get to know these young women in different environments.

I scheduled my first meeting with the young women of the class for February 19, 1993. This was the day the girls were to meet me and to decide if they wanted to participate. I wanted to make a good impression. To prepare for the study's introduction, I wrote an agenda that looked like this:

1. Introduce myself.
    My personal story.
    School & university experiences.
2. My experience as a teen.
    I wasn't quiet but I chose very carefully what I said.
    I didn't talk about things that were really important.
    Reading wasn't important.
    It might have helped to talk with others.
3. Intentions of the research.
    Voice & silencing.
    Plan the research together by listening to everyone.
    Use reading & conversation.
    Will not be evaluated or tested in any way.
4. What's in it for me?
    I'm interested in what helps young women believe in themselves.
    I chose this as a topic for my thesis for my M.Ed.
5. Promises
    Confidentiality, anonymity, proposal availability.
6. Time factor
    Approximately 2 times per week until sometime in May.
    About 80 minutes each session; supporting each other's ideas, feelings & thoughts.
    Talking to each other about what's really important.
    Plan as we go along with the research.

I was anxious and nervous the day I went to CenterCity School. Because I wanted these young women to like me, I wanted to make a great first impression. I can remember waiting apprehensively in the office for Mr. Jones.

> I arrived early at the school thinking I may have time to talk to Mr. Jones before 9:00 and get a chance to meet some of the students and staff ... [Then] I nervously waited for the girls in the music room, where I could talk with all of them. I explained to them what I would be doing after I told them a bit about myself. I noticed how they seemed to be more and more interested as I spoke, since their attention was focused on me and most looked at me while I spoke. I want to continue seeking their feedback, with these non-verbal cues. I need to pay attention. I gave them pieces of paper to write questions and also my phone number if any of them had any questions. (Journal Entry, February 19, 1993)

At this first meeting, I handed out a permission letter (Appendix A) and asked that, if they were interested, to have it signed by themselves and their parents and return it to me for the next meeting scheduled for February 22. I did not tape record the interactions at this meeting or the February 22nd one, since I felt it would be easier to build an atmosphere of trust without the intrusion of a tape recorder. I did not believe, at this point, that they knew enough about what was going on with the research. Moreover, there were young women who were not going to be in the research. I felt I was respecting their privacy.

Before the February 22nd meeting, Mr. Jones showed me a small, infrequently used room where the research group could meet for the next four months. This small room could have once been a staff room. It had a large table in the center, a sink, a teacher's desk, four carrels and two small blackboards. It was the space where we spent all our regular meetings talking, thinking, reading, and writing, and, occasionally, playing.

For this second meeting I was interested in hearing each young woman talk about herself, even if she was not going to continue in our group. I was also interested in learning about their reading backgrounds and habits. I had developed a reading survey (Appendix B) in order to help me find out such things as what these young women chose to read, how much time they spent reading, what influenced them in what they read, and their reasons for reading. When the eleven girls had settled into the room I asked them to introduce themselves and to tell one interesting thing about themselves. I began by introducing myself and telling one interesting thing about me. Everyone talked in turn. This took about fifty minutes. Some talked more than others; some were confident; some were shy. After our introductions, the girls filled out the reading survey. I gave them each some stationary to write me letters telling a bit about themselves after they had completed the survey. On one of the blackboards I made the following list of suggestions and questions to help them decide what they wanted to include in the letters.

What do you like? What don't you like? What do you like doing best in school?
What do you like doing best outside of school? What do you think research is?
Write about your background. Who is your favorite character and why?
How do you think we should choose our reading?
If more than 5 or 6 young women are interested how do you think we should choose who is to stay? How do you think the others may feel? Can we do something that will include the others, so no one feels left out? Do you think the boys feel left out?

I told them I would write back. I wanted to honor each young woman through this exchange. During this meeting, I stressed there would be a maximum of five young women in the group with a possible extension to six. I had mixed feelings about emphasizing this point. On the one hand, I did not want them to be too disappointed if they eventually were not able to be involved in the project. On the other hand, I did not want to discourage them from belonging to the project. More than anything, however, I wanted to be clear that if too many young women were interested, some would need to be excluded. If there were more than five or six young women, it would be very difficult for me to listen to each young woman's voice and stories. I wanted to express this from the beginning rather than to explain it later.

Only two signed permission letters were returned to me at this second meeting. There were others who were interested, and for whatever the reason, did not return the letters, but said they would do so for the next meeting scheduled for March 1, 1993. At this point, I trusted this would work out.

Choosing the Co-researchers

On March 1, 1993, I was excited and eager to know who would be in the research. This was the first day I used the tape recorder. I was interested in how the tape recorder would affect the conversation. As the eight young women gathered in our meeting room, I emphasized, "And don't let [the tape recorder] bother you. It's just going to be on." Quickly, Malory[1] interceded, "How can it not bother me? It's right in front of me" (03.01.93.01). Because I knew it would be difficult to identify the voices on the tape, I asked each person to say their name before they spoke. I was reluctant to ask them to do this since it would not be a natural part of conversation but I thought it would be important for transcribing this very important first tape. This worked at the very beginning. However, after getting into the conversation, it did not seem important enough to them or to me to be rigid about this. I knew by then it would not take very long before I could easily identify all the members in our conversation group.

---

[1] All names are pseudonyms.

At the beginning of the meeting, I again explained what I wanted from the research.

> I think it's important that we shape the research together so each of us has a voice in designing it ... I don't want to tell you every step of the way what you should be doing because I don't know if that's right for me to say. I'll make suggestions maybe sometimes because I've been thinking a lot about this stuff. I guess I want your input as well ... I don't know which way we're going to go. All I know is I want to listen to what you have to say and what's important for you to talk about, and listen to what silences you and what helps you talk about what is really important to you.(03.01.93.01)[2]

I then explained it was time to choose who was going to participate in the research. I asked the group how we should choose and the suggestion that we "draw from a hat" was accepted by all since, "it's the fairest way" (03.01.93.02). One young woman, who brought her permission letter to our second meeting, suggested, "You should just take from the people who brought their permission slips in" but this did not go over well since two young women who wanted to belong had not returned their letters. So I suggested that everyone put in a piece of paper with an 'x' or a ' ✓.' An 'x' indicated they did not want to participate. A ' ✓' indicated they did want to. I felt this would be anonymous enough if they had decided not to belong to the research group. I was concerned that they might be influenced by the peers around them. I did not think they should be asked to explain if they did not choose to do so. If they had an 'x' and I drew their names from the 'hat,' I would simply not say their names. However, there was only one young woman who put an 'x.' Her parents thought she should spend her time in the classroom with the teacher rather than in our research group. She was the only interested young woman not included in the research. She showed her support and interest by asking me if she could join us occasionally and greeted me whenever she saw me.

From the eight young women in the room, one chose not to join our conversation group. Choosing only five meant two would not be chosen. I had dreaded this prospect. In my journal I wrote,

> It was really difficult pulling the names from the hat on this day. The tension in the room was indescribable. After each name I pulled, I had many mixed feelings. I was excited about the names I pulled out but felt sorry for the girls who had not been chosen. I knew two names would be remaining, two girls would not be joining us. (Journal Entry, March 01, 1993)

---

[2] The numbered codes indicate the month, the day, the year and the page number(s) of the transcript.

After I had pulled the five names, I felt disappointed I could not include two more. The names of the young women chosen were: Nikki, Paula, Marissa, Lorelei and Malory. Helen and Annie were not chosen. "I could tell they were both upset. Annie, I could tell by her quivering lips, that she was going to cry. But I felt really lost as to what to say" (Journal Entry, March 01, 1993).

Opening the Conversations

At this meeting, we all agreed to allow the others to stay for the remainder of the session. They were eager to stay. Beginning this day, I taped each conversation using a cordless portable Realistic stereo cassette recorder.

Before the March 11th conversation, Lorelei approached me and explained her parents did not want her spending time outside the classroom. She dropped out of our group. I had mixed feelings about this situation. While I was sorry to lose Lorelei, I quickly decided to ask both Helen and Annie to join our group. I believed that six participants would be manageable. This was the outer limit I had established at the beginning of my discussions with this group. Later, on April 5, Helen told me about her decision to stay in her language learning classroom since she felt she was falling behind in some of her work. Even though I had already become attached to her and would miss her, I supported her decision.

Our conversations began in earnest on March 11, 1993, and I quickly became connected to each participant. I demonstrated caring by being in relationship with each young woman by accepting her unconditionally and developing a friendship through communication and mutual respect. It was important for me to demonstrate "attentive caring" by "attending to [the other] person and to feel related to that person in spite of what may be enormous differences" (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986, p. 143).

We met in our conversation group two times a week from March 1 to May 13, except for Spring Break, Easter Monday, the Thursday of their camping trip and one Monday I was not able to be there. Each conversation was approximately 1 1/2 hours long with the exception of two occasions, one when the grade nines met to discuss their camping trip and one when there was a fire drill. There was only one conversation when one girl was not in school and one where two were almost thirty minutes late.

Our conversations evolved in ways that helped each young woman express herself in the form she chose. Each conversation began by asking how everyone was and asking if they had any experiences they wanted to share. When this initial conversation died down, we usually talked about the reading we had selected. Because most of the girls did not keep up with the reading, we decided I would read aloud from Round the Bend and we would discuss anything that came up for them. From there, the conversation could travel in any direction. Sometimes the young women would be excited and enthusiastic and would talk without prompting, especially towards the end of the research. However, there were times when there were many silences and I felt compelled to ask questions, somewhat like an interviewer. At one point in the research I asked the young women to make a list of topics (Appendix C) they were interested in discussing to help me develop questions for those quiet times. There were times, as well, when I felt not everyone chose to speak. They chose to stay silent throughout the group discussion.

I asked that they write me letters. I found the letters an important way for them to communicate feelings and thoughts. I had difficulty keeping the letters organized and asked if I could get duo-tangs for each young woman filled with fluorescent paper. They agreed. On March 15 they began writing in these journals in the last ten to fifteen minutes of our conversation time. Every time they gave me some writing I responded by making an entry in their journals. There were exceptions, however. Annie did not like writing in her journal. Instead, she would occasionally give me letters and, more frequently, her poetry. I also had one-on-one time with each young woman at least once a week. During these times we could talk about things they may not have wanted to say in the group.

I was honored when I was asked to spend extra time with these young women and their classmates. Mr. Jones asked me if I wanted to join them at the public library and at a Chinook Theater production. The young women, themselves, asked me if I would join them at camp and at their graduation. I did not have any taped conversations with them at the theater or at their graduation but I was able to talk in smaller groups (2s and 3s) at the library and at the camp. Even though this was not a planned part of the research, these were opportunities to hear more stories and to learn more about each young woman. I cherished these conversations for all I learned and all I felt. I left these conversations a little more aware and knowing more about these young women.

To develop the open and thoughtful atmosphere I desired in the conversation meetings, it was important that I showed them I trusted them to decide what was best for the group. I knew I "must 'prize' the learner's feelings and opinions and hold the belief that the other person is fundamentally trustworthy. Empathic understanding is a necessary quality as is the willingness to live in uncertainty where only what I [discover] in the process of facilitating will guide [me] along the way" (Nemiroff, 1989, p. 6). I believed that it was important for the research to evolve from all members of the group. Because of this belief, I asked for feedback whenever there were decisions to be made about the research. When I began transcribing and writing I often informed the girls of my progress and continued to share my intentions.

Choosing the Literature

One of the first group decisions was choosing a book to read. At first, we used our time and energies in selecting books to read that would help draw out discussion topics and themes. We talked and they wrote about what they enjoyed reading. On March 11, we went to their school library to select books. From listening to their talks about their books and looking at the questionnaires, I spent one afternoon (March 13) in the university library and in the public library researching appropriate books that would be available for this research. I compiled a list (see Appendix D) to share with the group. From the list, I chose a short story "Crystal Stars Have Just Begun to Shine" to read together at the next meeting, March 15. On March 15 we read the short story and, after discussing it, I read the book list to the young women and asked them to respond. Because they were not very clear about which book they wanted to read, they said they trusted my choices. I asked them to choose books they would definitely not want to read. From the remaining list I chose two books as samples, Round the Bend by Mitzi Dale and We All Fall Down by Robert Cormier. Because I could only locate one copy of Round the Bend, I ordered, through the public library, seven copies of We All Fall Down. The Edmonton Public Library was a great resource and the staff was very helpful and accommodating. I made most of my requests and inquiries over the phone and after I had ordered the books it took from one week to ten days for the copies to arrive.

The last book we chose to read was chosen in a slightly different way. Because most of the girls did not keep up with the reading of We All Fall Down, we decided to choose a book that was shorter in length and more interesting for the girls. The girls decided they preferred a 'true horror,' or a ghost story. I approached a friend, Margaret Mackey who had read and analyzed many popular books for youth. She recommended that we read Stonewords, a story of a girl who met a ghost in her home where she lived with her grandparents. She loaned me her copy and I quickly obtained the other five copies from the Edmonton Public Library. We used We All Fall Down and Stonewords, one at a time, to read on our own and then talk about them in class. Because Round the Bend was so interesting to the girls, we decided I would read it during the times we had our conversations.

Becoming Leaders

From the beginning I was concerned about being seen as the authority since I was interested in developing a collaborative atmosphere. I encouraged discussion by allowing the girls to choose the conversational directions. I only intervened when I noticed one or more of the girls acting disinterested or when two or more would begin another conversation, a practice that I call 'side-talking.' The form my interventions took depended on the conversation and the nature of the disinterest. For example, I found myself asking questions of everyone when I felt one person was especially quiet. If there was side-talking, I concluded the conversation at the time was not important to all so I usually redirected the conversation by asking questions of the ones who had created a private conversation. Because I was concerned I was directing the group too much, I suggested they each participant take a turn 'directing.' I believed that they would then own the research more and take more responsibility in maintaining the conversation. They all agreed but preferred first to 'observe' one or two more conversations. On April 5, 1993, Annie was the first who volunteered to direct the conversation. Subsequently, others volunteered.

We spent many hours talking and listening to each other. Our conversations allowed us to get to know one another more and to talk about what was really important. We began to develop relationships. It was a special time when we heard many stories and created new ones. On our last scheduled meeting of May 13, 1993, I was saddened that our conversations were ending. The others said they would miss these special times. I explained I needed time with each of them individually so they could read and respond to their chapters. I regretted the ending and decided to negotiate more time with Mr. Jones. Even though it was final exam time he allowed me to continue the one-on-one conversations and the group conversations. We had seven more contacts. During these seven contacts, I met them individually to go through their chapters and to continue our one-on-one conversations. I also met them for four of these seven sessions to continue our regular group conversations.

In June I had completed some writing about each girl. I knew it was important to have them read some of what I had written before the end of June and to have them respond to it. All young women said they enjoyed the chapters and only two of them offered suggestions for minor changes to their documents.

These document drafts were written using their real names. However, they were reminded that they needed to choose pseudonyms. Marissa, Annie, and Nikki quickly began searching for names they thought they would like. Paula and Malory asked that they keep their real names. Paula was insistent at first, "Can I just keep my name and say that's the one I made up? Can't we do that?" Malory added, "Yeah, me too. I don't want to change my name" (06.17.93.14-15). However, I suggested they choose a name to protect the others from being identified.

Introducing

In the last part of this chapter, I introduce these five young women with whom I spent almost one hundred hours. By listening to their thoughts and feelings, I learned to appreciate their stories. The order in which I present these young women, is an order I have chosen, from youngest to oldest.

PAULA

Paula, the youngest in our conversation group, was also the youngest in her family. At fourteen, Paula believed that as a young woman she should have a good time doing things she enjoys doing. Paula described her family as a 'typical' Italian family, one where family is most important. Her parents took on the traditional family roles. Her mother works very hard to nurture the family by providing them with meals, clean clothes and a warm, comfortable home. Her father works as an architect in the city to financially support the family. Her brother, 18, and her two sisters, 22 and 27 years of age, consistently show they appreciate and enjoy their family by spending time together. In her spare time, Paula often went clothes shopping with her mother and, after she attained her learner's permit, chauffeured her mother around the city to run errands. Spending time with friends was also very important to Paula. She often talked about inviting her friends over to her house since she had a large house and yard in which to play sports.

NIKKI

Nikki, a beautiful fifteen-year-old, was curious to learn all she could learn and was especially eager to learn about her physical limitations. During the time of the research, she learned to play soccer and also, while away at camp, she attempted orienteering activities that most of her classmates would not try. She was usually intense and enthusiastic about learning these things. I learned her mother had a similar view regarding physical activities.

Nikki was one year old when her parents separated. She has lived with her mother since then but was often curious about what it would be like to live with her father. Many of her stories of her father were endearing ones, stories where she wanted to connect with him. There were stories where her father's actions showed Nikki she was special to him. These sparked thoughts about what it would have been like to live with him instead of her mother.

ANNIE

Many of Annie's stories told of her anger, confusion, frustration, and sadness. Her poems told of her passions, her sorrows, her dreams and fears. The origins of many of Annie's painful stories were ones she brought from her family. Being an only child in a family where her parents were separated, created certain pressures for her, such as choosing with whom she would live. Within the last year or so, Annie chose to isolate herself from her mother by spending most of her spare time with her friends. She believed it was important to have many experiences in her youth for "I'm only young once." She chose to spend time with peers with whose behavior she did not completely agree. She often told stories of going to casinos with them and seeing many fights. There were also stories about being pressured into taking drugs and alcohol.

MALORY

When I first met fifteen year old Malory, I was moved by her feisty spirit and her intensity. As I got to know her, I discovered the many interesting characteristics that made her that way. The most apparent upon meeting her was her model-like appearance. During our time together, I learned how righteous and determined she could get. Many times she would say things regardless of what others would say or think about her. Sometimes the anger within her seethed through her letters to me or into our conversations. There were times, though, when she was caring and supportive of those around her. She often teased the other young women in the group.

At the time of the research, Malory lived with her mother, her sister, her sister's fiancee and her two year old niece in a house near her school. Toward the end of the research, Malory was very busy working two part-time jobs; one was at the local Dairy Queen and the other was at the pool hall where she spent many hours of her free time.

MARISSA

Being sixteen-years-old and the oldest in her classroom, Marissa often wished she was in high school. At a time when many of her friends were getting their 'Learner's Permit,' she had been taking lessons to get her driver's license. She was up to two years older than other students in her grade.

At the age of six or seven, Marissa moved from Vietnam with her mother and father and her six brothers and sisters. Often Marissa talked about feeling resentful that she could not do what she thought she should be doing at her age, that is, going out with her friends more often. She did not feel that her parents allowed her to do many things her peers were doing. She seemed to have experiences and other freedoms many of her friends did not have. For example, Marissa was grateful her parents paid for her driving lessons.

She wanted to please her parents and did not complain to them. She wanted to be 'a good girl' with her family, and to show them that side of her. Around her friends and peers, she played a different role where she expressed more of what she was feeling.

Part 2: Portraits

In this section I create portraits of each young woman through my stories in the group. The chapters have similar themes which emerged in the conversations. Talk of relationships consistently emerged. Relating with others such as family members, girlfriends and boyfriends, were themes in our conversations. In all five portraits, I have included these themes. In addition, school appeared to be a theme of significance. For the most part, however, they told school stories as stories of successes and struggles in their interactions with teachers and peers.

Other themes for each young woman emerged in the conversations. These themes were individual, as is each young woman. The themes capture what I saw and what I experienced throughout the research process.

Chapter 4

PAULA

Proud to be of Italian heritage, Paula, an enthusiastic and energetic fourteen-year-old, had a passion for life that was exceptionally contagious. The little girl within her created a sense of lightheartedness and child-like curiosity. The young woman within her assured those around her that she was responsible for her own behavior and respectful of those around her.

Paula was the most cooperative in fulfilling her commitment to the project. She did this by completing any reading or writing that she agreed to do. She often expressed the view that it was essential we talked about things important to us. She liked being prepared for, and involved in, the research. She asked questions when she anticipated what was needed or what may help in the research. Some examples are: "Do you want us to bring novels?" (03.01.93.16), "Are we supposed to write back now?" and "Do you need our phone numbers?" (03.18.93.05). She also asked questions which showed she was interested in maintaining the conversations. "So what are we gonna talk about now?" (03.18.93.05) or "What are we supposed to talk about?" (03.18.93.07) were examples of her interest.

She showed that she was committed by completing all the reading we decided upon and writing in her journal whenever we saw each other. After a few weeks of being the only young woman to finish the 'assigned' reading she was disillusioned and said, "That's it. I'm not reading anymore. You guys should read. Are you guys illiterate?" (05.10.93.01). I was very pleased when she expressed in her journal, that she enjoyed the books that I selected.

> I, myself, like the book. I personally think you have very good taste when it comes to books. I really like this book because when I am reading and I don't want to put it down because every second paragraph something interesting happens. (Paula's Journal, 03.25.93)

When I asked her what she wanted to include about herself in this document she said, "just put in that I'm a normal fourteen-year-old and that's it" (04.05.93.10). Toward the end of the conversations at her school, Paula asked many questions about the thesis. "So you're gonna bring them in on Monday? ("Yeah"). So I'll get a little section to read? ("Uhuh"). Cool. So where's this book going to? To the university? ... Could we get to rent this book out?" (06.03.93.06). I was pleased and honored she was so excited about the work we were doing together.

Toward the conclusion of our time together, I asked Paula to tell me what she liked most and what was most difficult about the conversations. She replied,

> Communicating I guess. I guess talking about things that happened in our real life ... [It was hardest when] I don't know. I guess at the very beginning we didn't know what to do and we didn't know you. It was like at the beginning when we

> didn't want to communicate with each other cause we were all in a fight. And that's it. (05.13.93.20)

In a later conversation, she added, "It was fun ... [to] learn more things, you know, like reading the books and you making us talk out to each other and our little one-on-one sessions ... [We got the chance] to talk about our feelings" (05.27.93.10).

In the rest of this chapter I share the story of Paula, a 'normal' fourteen-year-old for whom I learned to care and to respect.

Loyalty to the Research and the Researchers

At the beginning of the research I was worried I would be seen as an authority figure rather than as another person in the conversation. Paula was the first to set my mind at ease regarding my anxiety when she articulated, "I don't know if you guys see her as a teacher but I don't" (03.01.93.13). Later, Paula asked me personal questions. This indicated to me that she did not see me as an authority; I was very pleased. For example, she questioned me about a relationship I was involved in at the time. "Are you guys still seeing each other? ... How old is he? That's really young" (04.05.93.03).

Paula was also interested in maintaining contact with all the people in the group. When we attempted to arrange extra activities outside of school she showed she valued the time we spent together in the group by being flexible. I appreciated that she was open to many suggested activities and meeting times.

Paula did not think she learned anything about herself during the conversations. She, however, expressed that she learned more about the other young women in the group (05.27.93.10). She learned that "everybody's got their own opinions to everything, I guess. I don't know. I guess when you ask questions they all had different suggestions and we all have different opinions" (05.27.93.11). Once I asked her "What do you want teachers or parents or the general public to know about young women your age?"

> They have to listen to teenagers cause some of them, I don't know, they need to be listened to ... my best friend from a ... high school, has another friend who wants to commit suicide cause her stepmother doesn't like her and always hits her and everything, but nobody will listen to Melissa so it's no use even trying to talk to people cause nobody will listen to her except for us. We'll keep listening. (04.26.93.18)

This story of Melissa reminded me of the consequences of neglecting to listen to someone's pain. Paula's recognition of Melissa's problem and her action showed me that she cares about people around her.

Her Family

Paula lived with her father and mother in their home close to her school. At the time of the research her brother was eighteen years old and her two sisters were twenty-five and twenty-seven. To Paula, there was nothing more important than her family. Her relationships with the members in her family seemed very stable. She was not sarcastic about and did not express anger toward anyone in her family. She, however, spoke playfully about them when she told us about who made the rules in her house. "My mommy, my daddy, my brother, my sister, my [other] sister and the stupid cat. I'm serious. I'm the only one who doesn't make up the stupid rules" (05.10.93.10).

Since she was the youngest member in her family, with a thirteen year span between her and her oldest sister, I asked if her siblings spoiled her. She responded, "No, but my mommy and my daddy do" (03.11.93.12). I got the sense that Paula's family was close when I asked if she ever got lonely. Paula claimed, "It's always noisy in my house. Too many people there to get lonely ... Everybody's at my house, all the kids are still at home and nobody wants to move out" (03.18.93.04).

Paula's parents were very special to her. She spoke of them often. When asked about what her parents were like, Paula replied, "[They're] like a bunch of old-time parents, I guess" (06.03.93.08). When asked to expand upon that she continued,

> My mom is working; well she's not working, like for example today she gets up at five and she starts cleaning the house ... By seven o'clock she's done the whole basement, or the whole house except for our rooms, cause we're still sleeping. She likes to be organized and she doesn't like to have the house dirty or the dishes dirty, you know, she's very clean and that's about it. And my dad, he works, he comes home, he sleeps, he wakes up to go to eat and then he sleeps again. Then my mom gives him heck. (06.03.93.08)

Paula's parents were able to provide things some of the parents of the other girls were not able to provide for their children. During one conversation she proclaimed, "I get whatever I want" (05.10.93.17). For example, Paula expected that her parents would buy her a jeep. "My parents bought the other kids cars [so] they'll buy me one" (04.08.93.06). In addition, they helped satisfy her desire to be well dressed by providing her with the money she needed to buy all the clothes she wanted for school, church, recreation and special occasions, such as weddings and her graduation.

With all they provided for their daughter, Paula's parents seemed to have morals that she was expected to acquire. During our conversations regarding alcohol, Paula's response to the question, "Do you get drunk?" was "No, [my parents would] kill me ... I'm allowed to drink a half a cooler" (03.25.93.03). Paula commented on her parents' consumption during an earlier conversation concerning drug and alcohol use. "My father will drink but he'll drink like a beer when company comes over. My mother will only let him have one. So my father got used to it so he drinks little alcohol" (03.11.93.12). Her parents' words seemed to affect Paula. For example, her parents' attitudes prevailed when she respectfully affirmed, "You have to respect adults" (03.15.93.11).

There were times during our conversations, as well, when Paula would speak in a humorous tone about her parents. For example, she said, "When you get to my parents' age then you can start complaining" (04.05.93.03). There was also a story that she told about the time her sister and she played a prank on her father.

> The other day ... he goes, "Make me an espresso. When I wake up I want it ready." And we looked at him and got mad, cause that's all he ever says, but we never make it so why does he keep saying it ... [One time] we were watching America's Funniest Home Videos, when this guy was sleeping, they put shaving cream on one hand and they were feathering his nose so when he went to go scratch and he went like this and he was all shaving cream. So we did that to my father and we ran. Like we hid for hours. (06.03.93.08-09)

Out of all her family members, Paula seemed to be closest with her mother. A story demonstrating her mother's attachment to her was initiated by a comment which Nikki made about her own mother wanting her to join the army for at least two years. Paula proceeded by expressing, "My mother would cry. She cried cause I went away camping for two days" (05.10.93.11). Paula did many things with her mother. For one, ever since she passed her learner's permit test, her mother wanted to be driven everywhere she needed to go. "I usually have to drive my mother all over the place" (06.03.93.08). An activity they both enjoyed was when Paula and her mother went shopping together. I had an opportunity to confirm closeness with her mother when I saw both of them at the Fringe Festival, an outdoor theater event, almost two months after our conversations were completed (Journal Entry, August 14, 1993).

Paula was very proud of her mother. I saw evidence early in our conversations. "Everybody likes their mom" she added during an initial 'get acquainted' talk after three of the five young women explained that they lived with their mother only (03.11.93.13). Later in the research, she praised her mother's culinary skills and indicated that she shared some baking with her friends in school. For example, during a one-on-one conversation, Paula said,

> I like my mom's food. I'm used to it ... But pasta she doesn't make too much. I don't know, my brother he'll have it like morning, afternoon and supper ... She makes Italian cookies. They're like little chocolate things and have almonds, chocolate chips and marshmallows. Whenever I bring them to school [other students] break into my locker and eat them all. I didn't eat them all. I don't get any anymore. (04.05.93.10)

The conversation that revolved around rules and discipline revealed many things about each young woman's home life. Paula boasted that she did not get grounded or punished in any way. The only time "I was supposed to be grounded for a month, I was only grounded for two days" (03.25.93.03).

The story about how Paula got her name was initiated by the question, "What is your middle name?" She expressed that she was very happy not to have a middle name. Paula did not like two of her siblings' middle names, the names her mother chose for them. One sister's middle name "is pretty pitiful" and her brother's middle name, she jokingly deduced that her mother "probably looked at a label. I don't know, my mother ... She couldn't think of one [middle name for me], a stupid one. She goes, 'I couldn't think of a stupid one for you.' I'm like, 'Oh, yeah. Thank God it wouldn't be my first name.' But I was named after my grandmother but she died at the birth of my mother." This conversation concerning the names her parents gave her and her siblings led Paula into talking about her mother's recent communication about her grandmother. "We were talking cause my [step] grandmother came in the other day ... and we were talking about it and ... my mother says sometimes she wished she knew her real mother ... I feel pretty bad. I didn't know what to say" (06.17.93.03). I was touched by this story and understood Paula's uncertainty in knowing how to respond appropriately to her mother.

Paula occasionally mentioned her two sisters and her brother. Usually when she mentioned her brother, she made jokes about him. For example, I asked, "So does anybody have anything, a fear from the past that keeps haunting you or coming back?" (05.03.93.03). Paula responded, "My brother keeps coming back" (05.03.93.04). When she spoke of her sisters, her manner was more serious where she would tell about some of their times together. One of the first times she spoke of one of her sisters was when "my sister got to meet [the band members from Guns 'n Roses]. One of her friends cut one of the band member's hair and he told her to go to the Hilton Hotel and pick up two V.I.P. cards so my sister got to meet all the band members" (04.05.93.01). Paula seemed proud her sister had such special privileges.

There was another 'family' that Paula talked about. She was a 'little sister' to some people she met while camping. She seemed to care deeply about these people who protected her as if she was a part of their family.

> I met them a few years back. They're really nice guys. They are all in high school and they call me their little sister because I'm younger than them and once this guy came up to me and asked me how old I was and I didn't want to tell him so I told him to guess and he goes, "Twenty-two" ... Then Pat, he is very protective of me ... walks up and says, "Hey, buddy. Leave my little sister alone. She's only fourteen don't you have a life that you have to pick on teens" ... I like them. They treat me like a mature adult but they also treat me like a little sister. That's why I love them. (Paula's Journal, 06.03.93)

Many of these friends protected their 'little sister' in other instances as well. Even when she wanted to walk on the beach by herself "sometimes they won't let me ... because they think something is going to happen" (Paula's Journal, 06.06.93). Paula quickly got attached to these people who acted like her family.

Paula's family seemed close knit and caring of one another. The love she showed for her family was also the love she received from them. The caring she learned within her family was extended to the world outside of her family as well.

Her Peers

As an outsider looking in, Paula seemed very self-assured and confident around her peers. She enjoyed being around them and it seemed that she was well-liked. When they got together they often talked about

> a lot of things like sports, and girlfriend/boyfriend ... A lot of things, whatever we see, we'll just pick on something. We'll see somebody walking down the street and the guys will pick on him or her so whatever comes to mind, we talk about. (04.26.93.18)

Paula also had friends from other grades and other schools. Many of her stories included both her family and her friends. For example she wrote,

> Last night Nikki, Ivan, Justin and Dean came over and played basketball. I have a really big house so that leaves a really big driveway so they always like coming over and playing. They like it because they like my mom and dad and they really like my mom's cooking and her cookies. So it was fun. We had a really good time. (Paula's Journal, 05.10.93).

Paula had family members who were also her close friends. She wrote about her cousin, Tina, who she thought of as one of her closest friends.

> Nikki and Marissa are my closest friends and also I'd consider my cousin Tina who goes to [high school]. We talk a lot if I have problems and she has problems. We share and talk. She's the best and next year she's in grade 12 and I'm in grade 10. She can help me in high school if I need the help. (Paula's Journal, 06.06.93).

There were times, however, when she got angry at one friend or another. In her journal she wrote once, "I'm just so mad I could just punch a wall" (Paula's Journal, 05.13.93). This anger came when a friend, Justin, took her brother's belt without asking and didn't return it for almost a week. When Paula found out Justin had this belt with its very expensive buckle, she showed her disapproval by doing a number of things. She asked him to return it, she openly defended her own values and she was cold to him. She was quite resentful when he justified his actions by saying, "Oh you're rich, you can afford things" (05.13.93.19). She argued, "'I don't give a shit. My father and mother work really hard, just like your mother does and I don't come over to your house and take things.' He doesn't care" (05.13.93.9). Later, she was able to get over her angry feelings and forgive Justin for what he had done.

Paula enjoyed helping those around her. For example, when Marissa was about to take her learner's permit exam, Paula quizzed her the day of the exam. There were times, however, when friends would reject her help when she wanted to help them through their difficulties. Once she wanted to talk with Malory when she thought there were difficulties in Malory's life. "We tried to talk to her but she'll talk to others instead of talking to us. If she wants to talk to us she can" (03.18.93.08). I could tell how frustrated she was when Malory did not want her support.

Paula continued to refer to situations where she had conflicts or misunderstandings with her peers. She did not like to "get into arguments for no reason, over little things" (04.15.93.08). She saw repercussions for not being open with the person with whom she was in conflict. For example she said, "some people they do that and they get mad at something else and then take it out on people" (04.15.93.09).

Regardless of how important her friends were to her, there were times when Paula chose what was best for her rather than what was best for her friends. She was pressured before her grade nine graduation to have a grad party at her house.

> My house is bigger than anyone else's so Marissa is like, "Have a party, have a party." I thought, "No." The last time I had a party they destroyed my house. They did. I had a party and I went upstairs for two minutes and I came downstairs and everyone ambushed my house. I was like, "Hey." It was okay. They didn't wreck it too bad. Just my carpet got a whole bunch of junk on it. (06.03.93.07)

Paula was proud of having many friends. She seemed to enjoy meeting many new friends while continuing relationships with old friends. Her interest in being with her friends almost matched her desire to be loyal to her family.

❧ *Young Men* ❧

In her letters, there were references to young men who were attracted to her. Her best relationship was with a young man she dated for eight months. "He was going off to high school this year ... We knew it wouldn't work since he was going to a different school and we wouldn't see much of each other. So we broke it off ... He calls me when he has problems and needs a friend to talk to" (04.26.93.18). She believed she was too young to be dating someone seriously in grade nine. In one letter written in the first month of our research, Paula wrote, "Well I think I'll wait till high school just to be more mature and if I get a boyfriend there, well, then I'll be happy." I believe, however, she wanted a relationship with a young man who would "want me for me not for anything else" (Paula's Journal, 03.20.93). Later in the month she wrote about an experience with a young man whom she liked.

> Oh, my God, do you remember that guy, Paul, I was telling you about? Well, today at lunch he was at the corner store when me and Nikki [were there] ... He asked me if I like this guy Perry and I said, "No," and he asked why and I said, "Because I still like somebody else," and he goes, "Could it be me?" And I go, "If

> it is I wouldn't tell you anyways," and he gives me a kiss on the cheek and a hug and says, "I hope you do cause the way you feel for me is the way I feel for you." (Paula's Journal, 03.27.93)

After she got to know him a little better, however, she knew she could not trust him.

> Well, he went out with this one girl and he told her that he had sex with another girl just so they could break up but he never did. You see, he just said that. So when he told me about this I kind of got turned off but he told me that if we ever went out that he would never do that to me but it's hard to trust anybody who would do that, right? So that's why I kind of don't have too many feelings left. (Paula's Journal, 05.18.93)

In her journal, she questioned whether a relationship with Paul would be better for her than a relationship with another young man who showed interest in her. Instead of choosing one over the other, she decided to have casual relationships with both. She decided it would be better for her to wait until she was in high school.

Paula was quite sure about her own opinion about sexual relations. "It really depends. Everyone has their own opinion on things. For me, I don't know. For sex you wait until you find the right person, when you get married ... and when you can at least support yourself" (04.26.93.18). This opinion about waiting until marriage to have sexual relations was one not shared by the other girls in the group.

The confidence and self-assurance in herself was such where she would rather be without any relationship at all so she could, at the right time, date someone who was more suited to her. I admired this quality in Paula, especially when the other girls would talk about their boyfriends or dating.

School

School did not seem to be an extremely important part of Paula's life except as it would help her get into college or university programs she was interested in. One of her passions in school was track and field. Another was volleyball. She often talked about how she spent much time and energy in track and field competitions.

Besides sports stories, she told very few stories about her time in school. The stories she told were stories about her peers in school rather than about what she learned in her classes. Occasionally, when we collectively spoke of teachers or marks, Paula would add her thoughts and feelings.

> Val: So are you guys reading another book in Mr. Jones' classroom along with this one?
> Marissa: "The Moon is Down." It's boring.
> Paula: We were supposed to finish that but we didn't finish. We told him we finished it but never read it cause I was reading this.

Nikki: It was so boring. Oh my God ... I can't study for social. I was reading a book and I fell asleep.
Marissa: He doesn't teach good.
Paula: Don't complain. He doesn't give us many tests. Only one per chapter.
Nikki: And you know how hard it is?
Paula: I got 72%. How much did you get?
(04.05.93.02)

Even though Paula did not seem as concerned as some of the others in the group about her marks she still contended that "I need to get my marks up like everybody else" (03.11.93.07). She also had aspirations of challenging work in high school when she said, "I want to take ten courses, except for math cause math is too hard. I'll work day by day I guess" (03.18.93.08).

A very exciting school experience for Paula was when she went camping with the rest of her classmates in grade nine. She wrote in her letter, "Two days after we went camping. What a blast! We didn't go to bed till 5:30 in the morning and the guys came in our room and didn't leave till [late] and we had to get up at 7:30. It was so fun" (Paula's Journal, May 10).

This story, while it took place during school hours and was a school function, was not the stereotypical school story, where students learn only in the classroom. In Paula's telling and retelling of this particular school story, I knew she had learned more about being around her peers and had enjoyed the whole process.

Wit and Humor

There were many occasions when we laughed during our conversations. Paula would initiate such laughter often. For example, before I knew each participant very well, I asked for suggestions about what we could do together for fun after school. Paula suggested we go see male strippers. No one expected this spontaneous comment since a burst of laughter followed it.

Many times what made it so amusing for me was the spontaneity of her interjections. For example, when I asked for phone numbers to contact their parents Paula explained, "I'm not allowed to give my number out to strangers" (03.22.93.01). I was so surprised by this declaration that I was speechless and we all giggled heartily.

On another occasion, Nikki mentioned that "we're gonna die in 1997," and Paula replied, "I want to die a virgin," and laughter followed. She explained further that "it's a joke from my mom this morning. 'You're gonna die a virgin' " (05.15.93.07). This kind of comment eased the atmosphere and seemed to lighten any tension which remained from Nikki's sobering remark.

Paula also liked teasing the other young women in the group. During one conversation, Nikki explained an unusual dream she had one night. Without much reflection, Paula jokingly interpreted it when she said, "That means you're a loner in life" (05.03.93.04). This teasing ended in a wrestling match between the two.

Paula's spontaneous comments and her lighthearted teasing were very desirable in a situation that could have easily turned into something far too serious. I was certain that Paula would continue to lighten up almost every situation with her wit and humor.

❧ *Sports & Recreation* ❧

Being one of the two athletic young women in our conversation group, Paula seemed extremely busy with her sports activities, such as ringette and soccer. She maintained that competition was very important to her in sports. She liked soccer and volleyball "cause they're competitive" (03.11.93.08). Paula's interest and involvement in sports was extremely enviable. Her love for athletic activities was almost as great as her devotion and respect for her family. "Well about being so busy with sports and everything I enjoy doing them but once in awhile I get the feeling that I wanna just quit but I don't want to because it keeps me busy. I don't need a job or anything so I like doing it" (Paula's Journal, 03.18.93).

One reason for such devotion to playing soccer was the number of years she had dedicated to perfecting it. She had played the game since she was six or seven years old and was such a devout soccer player that she had even played in the snow (04.05.93.02). One day she came to the conversation group with a story about how "I just got my bones cracked in my rib" and ended up in a hospital while playing soccer at a weekend tournament (03.15.93.03). Later that week, in a one-on-one conversation, Paula expanded this story, "I was going in for a goal and this girl was mad and got me in between my pads but it was fun and I went out on a stretcher. I got treated real well. I got served and everything" (03.18.93.08). She seemed pleased to get the attention. That made the injury worthwhile.

Besides soccer, Paula usually kept herself busy after school and during her summer holidays with sports or other recreational activities such as playing on an organized ringette team and water skiing. When we first began our conversations, Paula was involved in ringette, which often had her involved in weekend tournaments. During the summer she enjoyed camping with her family in Penticton. She spoke of her summer vacations quite often. During one conversation she told the story of the time Malory went camping with her.

> Last year we went to Penticton. My cousin owns a campground there ... We had a lot of fun. We went on the beach ... and played beach volleyball. We went to the States too. We're walking down the streets and Malory ... had to get her shoes from the car. She stepped on dog poo and ohh, she didn't go out of the car after that. It was funny. (04.05.93.11)

In addition to past summers in Penticton, she indicated that she was eager to go back again during her summer holidays.

Making Sense of Her World

Paula generally had opinions about everything we discussed. When her ideas were well thought out, she expressed them in her own way regardless of what the other girls asserted. For example, she was deeply concerned about stories on a daily talk show, "Oprah," about babies who were murdered by their mothers. These women were in jail but Paula expressed, "I think they should be killed" (05.06.93.01). There also were times when she had not thought about the issue or area we discussed. Mostly, she remained silent during these conversations. For example, she did not have anything to add when we talked about the smoking law that prohibits youth under the age of sixteen from purchasing cigarettes. I believe this was something Paula did not think much about since she did not smoke.

Many times she considered more than just her own situation or experience when we talked about particular issues. For example, in talking about swearing, Paula expressed, "It depends on the situation like when you're in a bad mood somebody makes you even more mad" and "most people do it when they're mad though" (03.01.93.03).

In the group conversations, Paula wanted everyone to have a voice concerning the issue that was being brought up. "Well, we'll pick [a topic] that's interesting to all six of us" (03.01.93.15). She also showed she was open-minded and forgiving. Many times she was willing to forgive and accept another person's negative actions. When we talked about the conflict with Justin and her brother's belt she was eager to forgive him and resolve the conflict. Even though she was quite angry with Justin, she wanted to believe he would not do the same thing again since he had never done it before.

Paula was a supporter of those around her and seemed to enjoy sharing experiences with others. She was prepared to speak up for the young women not in our group. At the first conversation, when the group was being chosen, she was the only one who openly defended the others. Paula responded loudly, "Let them stay" (03.01.93.13).

Self-Confidence

Paula seemed to have a lot of confidence and showed that she respected herself. In one of our conversations, when I asked her about what she wanted me to say in this document, she replied, "[Say] that I'm a very nice person" (05.06.93.07). From what I know of Paula, she is respectful of those around her and will help her friends when they are troubled. When she responded to a question in a letter describing her physical attractiveness, "I know I'm not ugly and I know I'm not beautiful but I get by" (Paula's Journal, 03.20.93). There was other evidence in our conversations that suggested Paula's self-image was positive. For example, she bragged that, "Oh, I went to the lake yesterday and on the long weekend and we were on our boat fishing and I looked in the paper yesterday and I screamed and my brother comes running and we were in The Edmonton Journal.

In the 'B' section we were in our little boat. I was with my friend and her dad" (05.27.93.12). She seemed proud to have been noticed by a photographer.

There was another side to Paula which told others she was in control and could not be pushed around. Her personality was such that she showed people she was confident in her opinions and in her actions. The only time I saw her become overbearing was when someone else sat in her chair. "Go get out of here" (03.11.93.01) or "Get out of my seat" (03.25.93.01) was something that I heard quite often at the beginning of many sessions. This was Paula's attempt to reclaim the chair she had previously secured as her own. Situated directly opposite me, Paula would ensure she sat in that exact place amongst us during every conversation. Every time she made this demand she managed to get her request. Another example of how she was controlling toward others was when she would correct Nikki's grammar during our conversations. For example once Nikki said, "I'm not going out with him no more" and Paula corrected it with "anymore" (03.25.93.01).

The Young Woman

In reflecting about all that I learned about Paula, I have made conclusions that only I can make, considering my special situation with her and the other young women in our conversation group. Her energy and spontaneity were always welcomed. Her spirit was one which was motivated and candid. I will remember Paula's response to "What do you like most about your life?" when she said, "I don't know. My friends and my family" (05.27.93.11). This statement was one true to her actions, to her integrity.

Paula had many advantages most of the others did not have, such as financial and family security. Her family, especially her mother, seemed to be extremely important to her. The stories she told were filled with compassion for each other and a deep love for her parents and her siblings. The story she is living out is one where her family is her strength and where she is respected and nurtured.

I felt accepted by this young woman and I was honored she chose to participate in the research.

Chapter 5

NIKKI

A vivacious fourteen-year-old, Nikki breezed into the conversation group with contagious enthusiasm and a carefree attitude the others did not seem to have. Her manner seemed to reflect genuine curiosity and sincerity. Her love for sports, especially soccer, swimming, track and field, kept her extremely busy in her spare time. Since physical activities were a large part of her life, she spoke of them often.

Nikki was almost always hungry. When she was in possession of it, she brought food, liquid or solid, to our group conversations and she usually got teased by the others about her perpetual eating and insatiable appetite. Once she boasted "today I had four pieces of grilled cheese, two pieces of pie, a can of pop and French fries ... I'm so full" (06.14.93.05-06).

Nikki shared many interesting stories, some of them about her family, especially her mother, others about school and still others about the supernatural. Even though Nikki did not keep up with much of the reading we had agreed to do in the group, she continued to read books in which she was interested. Moreover, she talked about these books even after the group conversations were over.

Family Relationships

Nikki, as an only child, lived with her mother, a single parent, and visited her father occasionally. Her mother and father separated when she was only one year old and she contended that she does not remember what it was like to have both parents together. She claimed, however, to have "had a dream they got back together once, when I was younger" (06.03.93.05). During one conversation, we talked about children blaming themselves for the breakup of their parents. Nikki interjected that she did not feel responsible for the separation and divorce of her parents.

The stories Nikki told of her childhood, included stories of when she was an infant up until the present. Some were stories told to her by her mother and father. Nikki seemed amused about the story her mother told about her as a baby. "I found out yesterday that when I was little my mom used to make me stay up so she could see something move in the house" (05.27.93.09).

Mostly, Nikki and her mother got along well. Nikki's mother seemed to serve as her role model in sports, since many of the stories Nikki told about her mother were about how active she was. Nikki also told stories about her mother's youth. "She reminds me of a hippie" (03.22.93.01). In a later conversation, Nikki expanded,

> She had long hair and a part in the middle ... There are pictures of when she was stoned and drunk. They are so funny ... She did drugs when she was fourteen ... I remember when I was younger all these guys used to come over and they used to smoke dope ... I used to sit there and watch knives stick out of the stove ... I used

> to always try to find questions. I'd go to bed, right, and I'd find these questions to ask my mom so I could go up and see what they were doing. Ha ha. And my mom, it was kind of obvious cause I asked like ten questions and she's like, 'Go back to bed. Don't come back out here' and I used to sneak around my door in the hallway and peek around the corner. (05.10.93.19)

Nikki told other stories about some of her mother's antics as a young woman. "In Toronto, in the fall ... there were lots of leaves so [my mother and her friends] piled them up and my mom hid ... and they said, 'Okay, jump' and she did and scared the driver" (05.03.93.08). It seemed like Nikki was amused by these 'forbidden' stories of her mother.

Conflicts also occurred in Nikki's relationship with her mother. Nikki was frustrated when she was not allowed to speak up for herself during a conflict. She usually let her mom do all the talking since she felt she would not be listened to (03.15.93.12). "When I get in a fight with my mom I'm alone. It's like totally quiet" (03.22.93.03). Her mother had a suggested solution to their conflicts, one which Nikki took seriously. "Do you know what my mom wants me to do? She wants me to join the army ... for two or five years so she doesn't see me again" (05.10.93.11). It seemed like Nikki's feelings were hurt by this suggestion. In our conversation, Marissa interjected with, "Nikki, she was just kidding" to help Nikki understand that it was intended to be taken as a joke (05.10.93.11).

During the time of the conversations, Nikki and her mother had a struggle regarding Nikki's father and her grade nine graduation.

> My mom was mad at me cause I thought she was gonna come, right, and she goes, 'Oh I have to work' and I thought during that time ... Since my mom can't come then I'll ask my dad so I called him ... At first [Mom] was happy, right, cause we don't usually see each other ... and then after she's like 'Oh, you don't want me to go. You'd rather your father go.' (06.03.93.01)

Nikki's father came to the graduation. Unfortunately, however, Nikki's mother did not go.

Nikki had a ten o'clock curfew. Sometimes when she came home too late her mother punished her by grounding her. "Oh, she was gonna take my phone away from me once but, oh, I wouldn't let her ... I've only been grounded twice. Oh, and besides she just yells at me, that's all" (05.10.93.16).

Nikki had other stories of her mother, their relationship and their life together. For example, she told stories about her mother's extended use of the phone.

> It's funny cause she's on the phone, right. She talks with this one guy. She goes, "Okay, I got to go. I got to fix supper," and then she phones this other guy and goes, "I got to go. I got to cook supper," and so she phones another guy. By the time we have supper we're starving. (05.10.93.20)

This story led into another about what Nikki did when she was younger to take her mother's attention away from the phone.

> She was on the phone for a long time, right, and I was getting mad at her cause she wasn't playing with me or whatever so I turned off all the lights in the house and I wanted to see if I could walk around in the dark and I banged into the coffee table and I got this big thing on my knee and it was bleeding and everything and my mom [asked], "What are you trying to do?" (05.10.93.21)

I was curious as to know what Nikki's mother thought about these attention-seeking behaviors and if they encouraged her to satisfy Nikki's need for attention.

When we spoke in June, Nikki was looking forward to moving into a new apartment with her mother a few blocks away. She was given the choice by her mother of going to Toronto over the summer or of getting a waterbed for the new apartment. She responded, "I'll have a waterbed ... I want a waterbed so bad cause I have this bed that I can feel the springs at night" (06.14.93.08-09). Nikki seemed privileged by her mother's offer of a trip or furniture; she was very thoughtful in making the right decision.

Regretfully, Nikki did not see her father as often as she liked. Before he moved out of town she saw him every Thursday. During the period of the conversations, Nikki saw him infrequently; sometimes two months would go by before she would see him. She also said there were times when she wanted to live with her father.

> When I was small I would rather go live with my father ... When I was smaller he said he wanted to run away with me. But I want a chance to live with him ... He didn't take a job in Florida because of me. I just found out about that. (03.18.93.07)

She learned something else which surprised her about her father. During a recent visit with him, she found out he had saved all of the photos that were taken of the both of them. "Yeah, I wanted to cry when I saw those pictures ... I was so surprised cause I didn't know he had the pictures and they were of me when I was a baby, and all that, and he was carrying me and everything" (06.03.93.05). These stories were very important to Nikki. They told about how her father showed her he cared.

All the stories Nikki told of her father were filled with tenderness, caring, and happy memories. When asked to describe her father, Nikki began,

> Well, he told me when I was a little baby he wanted to run off with me and catch a train. Sometimes I say, "You should have." I wonder how it would be like if, we probably wouldn't be here ... He's taller than me ... He could be [attractive] if he didn't have a beard and a mustache and oh, if he cut his hair too. It's so messy (laughing). People say I look more like my dad. I don't know. (06.03.93.03)

Other stories about him were about times they spent together or some of the stories he told her about his youth.

> I remember we used to have this truck and he used to ... go fast at that time and he used to sit me on his knee in front of the steering wheel and I could barely look out and I'd go, "Faster" and my dad drove a little faster and I'd go, "Faster" and he goes, "I'm gonna get a ticket," and I go, "So what. Go faster." So he went really fast. He goes, "There I can't do it no more." I can't believe he sat me on his knee when he was driving. (06.07.93.02)

When she told me this story it seemed like she was pleased her father would let her have so much fun and would do what she asked. It seemed important that he granted her request for more speed.

During the initial conversations, Nikki complained she often got bored and lonely as an only child (3.11.93.13, 04.15.93.05). But later she expressed mixed feelings when she thought about what it would be like to have a brother or sister. "I kind of wish I had a brother or sister younger than me but if I want to go places ... I'd have to stay home with them and I couldn't go out or anything. I don't know" (06.03.93.01). Nikki's father, however, was dating a woman who had a six year old daughter. Nikki enjoyed the time they spent together (06.03.93.01). This little girl was almost a part-time sister who bragged about her big sister to those around her. Nikki was pleased that this little girl enjoyed being around her, "She was so happy when she found out [she was going to the graduation]. She was jumping up and down ... She copies everything I do" (06.03.93.01).

Stories She Tells Others About Herself as a Little Girl

When asked to describe herself as a little girl, Nikki explained, "Sometimes shy. Maybe energetic. I like doing lots of things. Sometimes bored and sometimes when my mom had friends over I'd sit in my room and play by myself, like with the toys and everything. I got bored" (06.07.93.01).

As well as describing herself physically, she used stories to describe the behaviors she used to get her mother's attention. A story where she displayed her sense of humor while seeking her mother's attention was "when in the morning my mom wouldn't wake up and she used to smoke so I put a whole bunch of cigarettes in her mouth and I was gonna light [them]" (05.06.93.06). Later she added to this story,

> She's like, "Don't you ever do that again. You could start the house on fire." She wakes up with these cigarettes sticking out of her mouth. I was gonna put them up her nose and her ears too but I didn't do that. (05.10.93.21)

There were other times when her curiosity and high level of activity got her attention from her mother and others around her.

> I have this couch and it had a little hole in the middle and I kept jumping on it and there was a huge hole and one of my mom's friends sat on it and just sunk in it. It's funny. My mom yelled at me for jumping on it. There was like a huge hole. (05.10.93.20).

Nikki told a story about a mishap in school one day initiated by the question, "Do you have a story about school that you'd like to tell that you'll never forget?" Nikki responded,

> Just the playground there. There used to be these monkey bars, right, and I was stuck on one of them and then I couldn't hold on no longer and it was kind of hard for me cause I was littler then and I fell right on my back and I was lying there and couldn't breathe ... The bell rang and I'm lying there and I got up. (05.13.93.17-18)

I sensed that Nikki was acting much braver than she was feeling after this distressing fall. From stories like these, she seemed like a very courageous young woman.

There was another story she told about her and her father which had special meaning for her.

> When I was younger we used to go to the park. And there's this picture with me. I was like four years old, and I was on the slide. I'll always remember that day. I don't know why ... He had this camera. It's really nice. It like does everything and he blew it up and got it really close. I don't know. I'll never forget that. (06.03.93.04)

I enjoyed the stories Nikki told of her childhood. They represented the times she felt special or was seeking attention.

☙ ***Friendships*** ☙

For Nikki, friendships were very important. To have the support of her friends was vital. Marissa was her best friend during the period of the research. When I asked what was important in a friendship Nikki responded,

> You can tell them anything and you can trust them ... Marissa, I can tell everything. Like when people tell me not to tell anyone and I want to tell someone cause it's important, I can tell Marissa and I know she won't tell nobody ... She's really nice and she's there when I need her and all that, I can trust her and all that. (06.07.93.02.03)

Nikki seemed proud to tell me that she defended Marissa when another member of the conversation group was critical (05.27.93.07). There were also times when Nikki spoke of conflicts with others, some of whom were once her close friends. For example, Malory was Nikki's closest friend in the past. They were no longer friendly with each other and Nikki admitted, "Malory's starting to annoy me. Her attitude" (04.05.93.12). There was also the time when Justin, Nikki's boyfriend at that time, took Paula's brother's belt. Nikki thought it unjust that Paula was mad at her.

> Paula's mad at me ... There was Justin and a whole bunch of us. We were at Paula's, right. And Justin took a belt, right. He was gonna give it back and he forgot to today and then she just went upstairs, right, and then when we were in class registering I was calling her and she looks at me and turns away. And I said, "What did I do? I didn't do nothing." So she gets mad at me for it and I didn't do nothing ... If it's my fault then like I'll start writing them and all that and just why I did whatever I did or whatever and if it's not my fault. Like right now I won't talk to Paula. I just, if she doesn't want to talk to me then fine, cause I didn't do nothing. (05.13.93.17)

I could tell that Nikki was very hurt by this, but I felt she also had mixed loyalties. If she stuck up for Paula, Justin may not approve. It was important to Nikki that she got Paula's approval, but in this case she was not going to compromise what she believed.

From my discussions with, and observations of, Nikki, I learned she was eager to please other people with whom she was in relationship. In one conversation she acknowledged, "I'm the type of girl who like, [my friends are] talking, 'Is it okay?' I'm 'Yeah, fine.' I agree with everything" (06.07.93.06). She seemed proud when she told me she got along easily with others. There were some behaviors, however, she was certain she would not partake in. Smoking was a good example. Once I asked Nikki, "Has there ever been a time when you've done something that was right rather than something that was popular?" (05.27.93.07). She responded, "Smoking. Malory wanted me to smoke. 'No.' Cause I'm into sports and all that. She's not, so it won't affect her. But it would me. So it would slow me down ... My mom told me that cause she stopped smoking and she could swim way faster" (05.27.93.07).

Relationships with Young Men

For approximately two months during the conversation time, Nikki had been dating a young man, Justin, who "takes me out and everything. I don't know, he treats me nice and all that" (04.26.93.19). Initially, Justin only liked Nikki as a friend. When she told him that she had more intense feelings for him she wrote,

> he doesn't feel the same way. I just fell to pieces when he told me he'll be there if I need someone to talk to when I'm feeling down ... He told me you'll find somebody who will love you as much as you love him. And that I'll find somebody that's right for me. He doesn't think he's the one. (Nikki's Journal, 04.08.93)

Later in the month Nikki was excited and happy that she had begun dating Justin (04.22.93.07).

In a subsequent conversation, Nikki expressed her uncertainty when she talked about her conversations on the phone with Justin.

> He won't talk to me until I talk to him. It's like, I'm trying to think hard on what to say and I get frustrated and everything. He goes, "How come you're so quiet?" and I go "I don't know." He goes, "How come you never talk?" "I don't know" and then I'm quiet. I don't know what to say ... I feel bad cause I don't talk ... You're talking in your mind ..."What should I say?" ... and I feel stupid if I say "I don't know what to talk about." He goes, "Anything, at least I'll know that you're there." (05.13.93.18)

Nikki, obviously frustrated, continued to wonder what she should have said to Justin to make the conversation happen. She blamed herself for the lack of substance in this conversation.

In June, about two months after she began dating Justin, he decided he did not want to date her any longer. When Nikki talked about Justin's decision she seemed confused and frustrated.

> He said that he's not happy and he says it's not cause of me ... but why should he bring me down cause every time he's sad I'll be sad and I didn't see that. And he said he wants to be alone and everything ... Right after that I went to his apartment and I went swimming. I saw him. He was flirting with Heather and he's like with Heather and he seems really happy ... I saw them walking back together and he looked happy and everything. (06.07.93.04)

Even though Nikki did not feel Justin was telling her the whole story about breaking up, she justified his behavior when she said, "He probably doesn't realize what he was doing" (06.07.93.05). However, she told me about a plan she had about seeking revenge on Justin's flirtation with Heather. "So I'm gonna see what's gonna happen at the party and if it doesn't go good there's gonna be other guys. I don't know, so I'm gonna go up to them and talk to them and see what Justin will do" (06.07.93.05).

A week later we talked again about Justin. Nikki said Justin was still her friend, "but I don't know, we don't talk or nothing" (06.14.93.06). Another young man, however, expressed his interest in her by asking her out. She claimed that, "He's nice. He treats me better than Justin" (06.14.93.06). She, however, was not as excited as she was when she first began dating Justin.

When asked about negative experiences with young men, Nikki talked about Tyler. "He dumped me, right, cause he likes this girl, Janet, but now Janet doesn't like him and now ... he regrets for dumping me." She explained, "I don't like when they boss you around and all they think about is sex" (04.26.93.19). There was a time when Tyler attempted to sexually assault Nikki. She was reluctant to tell the story until Paula and Marissa coaxed and aided her explanation.

> Marissa: Have you ever been pressured to have sex? Anybody? (Question was a suggested one.)
> Nikki: Yes.

Paula: With who?
Val: Want to tell a story about that?
Paula: Who, which one?
Marissa: I know. Can I say?
Nikki: What?
Marissa: Tyler.
Nikki: Yeah.
Val: Want to tell about that story?
Marissa: Okay, go ahead.
Paula: There we go (Paula puts the tape recorder closer to Nikki). Go, just go.
Marissa: Is it confidential?
Nikki: I don't know. If Ivan wouldn't have been there, if Ivan wasn't there he [Tyler] probably would have made me. He had my hands down and he's like, "Why not? Why not?"
Paula: I would have kicked him.
Nikki: And I closed my legs really tight. He couldn't get it opened.
Val: So there was another friend there?
Nikki: And Ivan heard me and like yelling and everything. He was "Why didn't you call me?" Tyler would have got mad.

When I fully understood the whole story I had feelings of anger, sadness, and frustration. How could this happen to such a girl such as Nikki? But these things happen more often than I realize or may want to admit.

Stories of the Supernatural

Nikki's fascination with the supernatural was reflected in the stories she told. The first conversation initiated totally by one of the young women in the group began with Nikki's response to Round the Bend, the book I read to the group. This fifty minute conversation about the supernatural was initiated by a reference to the devil (03.18.93.05). Mid-way into the conversation she admitted she had a dream. "It was the devil with long black nails telling me to come" (03.18.93.06). On another occasion, she explained this same dream in more detail.

> You could just see the outline of him and he was saying, "Nikki come, don't be scared" ... and I'm walking slowly and all of sudden I woke up ... There was this kind of line there, right, and if I would have passed it they said I wouldn't come back or something like that. I started looking around. It seemed so real. (05.03.93.04)

One day she read a poem to me that she wrote about a young female 'spirit' Nikki dreamed about. "I kept seeing more of her each time I dreamt of her but I never ever seen her face ... She's walking with this big stick and she's just like, as if she's gonna fall over. It was weird. It was like she's running from something. It was weird" (06.07.93.04). Nikki wished to include the following poem with no title.

It reminds me of her, the one that I always see
And maybe it's her that keeps following me
She has long hair and her gown is a creamy white
There's someone there but yet no one is in sight
And her skin is the color of snow
Why she's here, and how do I get rid of her, that I do not know
It's been her, the one who calls my name
In my dream she's there, it's all the same
But I haven't truly seen her face
She just stands there with such grace
She runs like the wind as if someone's behind
Or there's something there for her, something she has to find
She once was walking with a stick
But why does she play all these tricks
One thing I'll never really know is what is it that she wants
She'll be there, but you won't know it cause she's there to haunt.

Nikki's dreams influenced her throughout her waking hours as well. Nikki saw this same woman with a stick in a cemetery close to her home.

> It was on my birthday and we had nowhere to go and ... we went up to the cemetery, right, and I was standing there, just looking around and I saw her. She stepped over this graveyard and that was the last time I saw her. And then she, even yesterday or the day before that I was outside of my hallway ... then I saw somebody go by and I looked and no one was there. I just saw white. (05.27.93.05)

Nikki also admitted on two occasions that someone called her name from outside her apartment and when she checked to see who it was "no one was there" (03.18.93.05, 05.27.93.07). She also thought this was the same woman.

The stories of the supernatural Nikki told were not scary stories of monsters or demons. They were stories of spirits and presences in Nikki's life.

꧁ *Sports* ꧂

Nikki loved sports. There were days when she played soccer after school and then had swimming lessons for three hours after soccer. Some days she did not eat her dinner until she returned home at ten o'clock.

Track, sprinting, high jump, volleyball, soccer, and swimming were sports she talked about the most. The successes she experienced in track and field allowed her to compete in track meets outside of her own school. "Oh, in track I got fourth place in 100 meter and second place in 50 meter and second place in high jump and I'm on the relay team" (05.27.93.06). Early in June she participated in 'zones' where she came in fourth in one of the events.

Nikki also enjoyed attempting new activities. For example, during the spring, she learned to play soccer by joining an after school team. Prior to this soccer season she was not even confident in kicking the ball. However, success came quickly for Nikki in this new sport during her first practice when she scored two goals.

At a grade nine camp-out, Nikki demonstrated her bravery and desire to take on physical challenges by persevering at an activity many students did not even attempt. To be successful at this activity the participant was required to leap from a log stuck in the ground and grasp a swing a few meters away. After she was successful at the first level, Nikki moved to the next level, which was indicated by a higher log placed behind the first. She stopped trying when she failed at the third level to grasp the swing (Journal, 05.06.93).

Nikki often spoke of her enjoyment of, and participation in, swimming. Each time she talked about taking lessons or passing from one level to the next, she was enthusiastic and proud of her achievement.

> Oh, I passed my bronze medallion. Like right now I got a medal and two badges and then about a year or so I go back to just write the test and I get a ribbon and a medal or a bar. And then we have these bars that go down the ribbon ... My mom has it all too. (05.27.93.06)

Nikki also planned to take swimming and diving lessons during her summer holidays (06.14.93.08).

Other Passions

When Nikki got passionate about something, she expressed herself whole-heartedly. Her voice exploded with feelings of excitement and enthusiasm. One example was when she talked about her participation in sports. Another was her love for a singer from a rock band she went to see during the time of these conversations. She often referred to him as "my baby" and maintained a state where "I can't believe I went to [his] concert" (04.05.93.12). At the concert the band did a number of things that I would consider, "For Adults Only." Nikki talked mostly about these occurrences. "There are swears, oh. My mom listens to a song and beep, beep, beep; no wonder they banned them in Singapore." Also, "he mooned the audience." Nikki was also very impressed at the end of the concert when the main singer threw roses into the crowd and when the band distributed pizza and beer (04.05.93.12).

Dreams & Aspirations

Career choice was one topic of conversation. In the beginning, Nikki indicated she wanted to be a nurse. Later she said she had changed her mind but was uncertain as to what she would do after high school. By the end of our group conversations, she was clearer as to what she was interested in doing. She wanted to help women in trouble. "It's like, hum, it's not a lawyer. I saw this movie once and this girl got raped in a bar and everything like that and they didn't know who did it and everything, so this girl went to her and was helping her" (06.03.93.02).

One other group conversation dealt with what each young woman wanted in their future. Nikki said, "I want to be normal." When asked to elaborate, she said, "not too rich, not too poor" (05.03.93.05). Nikki was looking forward to being a wife and mother. "I want to have a kid. I just want to get married and have kids" (05.03.93.06). Her desire to have a family was further validated when she indicated during a conversation about teen pregnancy, "Scary. I can't wait to have a baby actually, but later" (04.26.93.20). She even considered the name Axl, after her favorite rock star, for a name for her first boy-child (05.03.93.06). More realistically, however, she added that "the kid will probably hate me for naming him that" (05.03.93.06).

School

Nikki's favorite subjects in school were gym, art and science. She enjoyed them "because they're fun. [In art] I like drawing ... and [in] phys. ed. mostly everything. Science cause it's interesting" (05.13.93.01).

Nikki found her ninth year in grade school very challenging in contrast to elementary school where "I did so good in elementary, eighties and nineties" (05.13.93.16). She complained she had failed at least one subject in each reporting period since beginning junior high school. For example, in social studies her mark went from 65% to 45% (03.11.93.09). Often she talked about homework and tests apathetically. She seemed unconcerned about studying or completing homework assignments. However, prior to the camping trip in May, Nikki was eager to complete an assignment for one of her courses. "I [have] to finish my report ... if I don't I can't go camping" (05.03.93.08). One time she explained she did not have effective study habits.

> And here's me. I bring a book home and my mom knows it, and my mom knows it's gonna be time for tests ... and she goes, "Did you bring your book home?" ... and then she's not at home, right, so I don't read my book ... She goes, "Oh, did you study?" "Yup." And I seem like I do better when I don't study. (06.14.93.07)

When we talked about effective teachers, Nikki explained what was especially good about one of her primary teachers. "She still remembers where I sat in grade two" (05.13.93.06). In contrast, she remembered a story when she defended herself when she felt unfairly treated by a teacher.

> Mr. Bush, I remember ... in social he used to go, "Read the chapter summary." I handed in an assignment and he goes, "No, it's wrong. Do it all over again" and I just had it and I go, "You sit there in your desk, you tell us to read and do a summary. You don't even go up there and teach" and I handed it in. (05.13.93.08)

By the tone of voice, Nikki was extremely upset that she did not receive any help from this teacher. It was frustrating to hand in an assignment that she could not fully understand.

When we talked about high school, Nikki said she was nervous about attending in the fall. She feared she would get lost in this large school (05.03.93.02).

'Don't Worry, Be Happy'

I found Nikki to be a very passionate and fun-loving young woman. She had a joy for what life had to offer. Once she talked about the fun she had at a beach in Mexico. When she expressed, "I'll never forget the waves there" (06.14.93.10) her voice was filled with the passion for the water. I will never forget how I felt when she said this simple phrase.

I enjoyed Nikki's response to the questions, "What do you think a teenager should do? What do you think a teenager should be like?" She answered, "Having fun and everything ... like going out places and doing stuff." I asked about responsibilities teenagers should have and she responded that going to school and getting good grades, as well as taking care of younger siblings, if there were any in the family (06.03.93.01). From what I knew of Nikki, I was certain she was enjoying her life. She had a carefree attitude that allowed her to enjoy herself.

Nikki did not want to get caught up in any thoughts or ideas that would contribute to negative feelings. An example of this was her attitude of not thinking about environmental problems since they would just worry her. "Forget about it and be happy ... But if you know a lot ... all you would think about is environment and just be worried about everything and 'Don't do this! Don't do this!' " (04.22.93.07).

Nikki said she had a fear that "we're gonna die in 1997 ... We're all gonna blow up. Cause they say if there's gonna be a third world war they're gonna blow up the whole world." She then claimed, "there's another planet that has a world like us" (04.15.93.07). Nikki's manner was not one of panic but one of certainty. "There is nothing that can be done" was the attitude she held throughout the conversation, regardless of what others thought or felt.

In these last two stories, I sensed a struggle within Nikki between experiencing happiness and thinking about the problems of the world. Concerning the environment she did not want to think about it because thinking about it caused her to worry. From what I sensed about her 'end of the world' story is she believed there was nothing she could do to change the world's destiny. There was a trade off for Nikki in these situations. If she thought too deeply about these things she worried and therefore, wouldn't be happy. For Nikki, happiness meant not worrying or thinking too much about things. I sense she felt she could do nothing to contribute to solving the problem so she remained apathetic.

The Young Woman

Nikki's spontaneity and lighthearted disposition were welcoming to me. To me, she had endearing child-like qualities when she allowed her inquisitiveness and interest to guide her actions. I enjoyed her when she questioned things for herself rather than looking to others for her answers. She was open and candid, which allowed me to get to know more about her. Even though she did not exhibit a high level of self-confidence when it came to school work, she was enthusiastic and extremely capable in sports. Her love for children and animals was exceptional. She was also a great storyteller. The stories she told of her childhood, with her mother and father, were refreshing and passionate. A theme which came up steadily for Nikki was the preservation of her relationship with her father. Nikki had a lot of love to give and I sensed she wanted it returned by those she cared about, her family and her friends.

Chapter 6

ANNIE

The autumn of my life is full of change
Full of new loves and lusts and things to rearrange
My winters, cold and bitter, with months yet to bear
Thoughts of remorse and sadness, deciding whether or not to care.
Spring blossoms and happiness blooms
Revitalized, refreshed and renewed as rain washes away gloom
Summer, my favorite, all excitement, glee, no fears
The cycle starts again with yet another year.

"I don't like writing letters but can I give you this poem instead?" asked Annie, as she handed me a wrinkled piece of paper early on into the research.

"Of course," I replied, excited that I would be getting some writing from this young woman I had grown to care for during my time in her school. I really connected with her style of writing, and looked forward to getting more poetry so I could understand her more. The poems she gave me later were also very revealing and expressive.

I am grateful for how the research group evolved in a way that allowed Annie to remain in the conversation group. Initially, Annie was one of the two not chosen to stay with the group. After the last person was chosen for the research, I could feel her heart drop as she tried to maintain an "I don't care anyway!" attitude. However, one of the young women dropped out of the group before the second conversation and I decided that six would be manageable. Annie was part of the group.

Annie was born in Vietnam where she lived with both her mother and father. After moving to Canada, Annie's mother and father separated and later divorced. At the time of the research, Annie was fourteen years old and lived with her mother.

From the beginning of the research, Annie disclosed many things about herself that left her extremely vulnerable. The stories she told of her family and of peer pressure were especially interesting and some were even quite tragic. As I discovered later in the research, she also held many things back. Some of the stories are presented here but Annie also disclosed many things that will not be included here, at her request. Her honesty and expressiveness have been valued not just for the sake of the research and my own interest but also in how I believe it has helped her make sense of her life and what she wants for her future.

I constantly looked forward to each meeting when I would learn more about Annie's fears, dreams and passions through the stories she told.

Because Annie believed she should have been born two or three years earlier she told people she was older. "I don't think it's fair that God put me on this earth two years later" (03.25.93.05). One of her wishes was that she was seventeen years old. She told me she had little in common with most of the people her age so she spent time with and felt more comfortable with people older than her. "I like older people cause they know more about life" (03.25.93.5). She often told me about friends who were in their twenties. One of her older friends, a new mother, expressed how difficult she found her youth to be. Annie used this information to write her first sonnet, which she later named Sonnet #1, after studying Shakespeare in one of her classes at school. After learning more about Annie, however, I believe her sonnet also spoke of her own childhood.

Sonnet #1
Sometimes I think of all I've done
In my youth which is wild yet wrong
Memories of laughter, excitement and fun
Years of life which fade like a song

Devoured by time and the eagerness to grow
Time to kill the ignorance which accompany youth
Time to figure what you need to know
Time to finally examine the truth.

As I think of childhood which I'm soon to leave
And what life has to offer in these dull days
I think of the goals I have yet to achieve
And think of how I've changed in so many ways.

The joy I once experienced, made me glad
Are now only memories that make me sad.

I was so flattered the night she called to read her first sonnet to me. I hadn't realized until then how truly interested she was in developing a relationship with me and in expressing her interest in the research. Later, Annie gave me more poems and showed interest in the research, by expressing her opinions and openly sharing her past, present and future stories.

Family

The telling of Annie's family stories began during a one-on-one conversation at the public library. When I asked her whom she most admired she told me,

> My mom, but don't let her know that. I admired how she was when she was young. Only mistake she had was marrying my father ... My mom was perfect when she was young, right. She was beautiful. I have some pictures of her and she's like the most gorgeous Oriental woman I've ever seen and people say I look like her when she was younger so maybe I'll grow up to look like her. And, well, my mom was really smart. She was like, when she was young she was a teacher and she wanted to be a doctor but her parents were too poor to send her to university ... Before that she was a singer. She was a famous singer in Vietnam.

> And later on when she was teaching she modeled, too. I want to be like that. My mom was really smart when she was young; always ahead of her class and everything. (04.22.93.03-04)

After Annie's mother and father separated she believed she was a burden to her mother. "I ruined her life. I hold her back and I stopped her from marrying this guy" (04.22.93.04). In this passage, Annie referred to a man her mother was very interested in after her divorce. When I asked if he was nice she replied,

> Annie: No, he slapped me once. He had no right to do that. He wasn't my dad. Then he [told] my mom how to raise me and I don't like that very much. I did everything I could to stop them from getting married. And I succeeded. Ha, ha.
> Val: Maybe, well if he was a jerk.
> Annie: Yeah, but my mom loved him.
> Val: Yeah.
> Annie: But if it wasn't for me they'd probably be married. But he didn't like me and I didn't like him at all. Then I don't know, my mom, I don't know why exactly my mom sacrifices for me so much cause I'm not stopping her from doing, I'm not stopping her from going out with her friends, or having fun or anything cause she never does.
> (04.22.93.04).

Annie did not get along well with her mom. She complained that her mother yelled at and nagged her too often (03.11.93.10). Annie described her mother as having two faces, one for her and one for other people. "When my friends are there, she's all nice and when they're gone she's like a witch" (04.19.93.09). Once when she was mad at her mom for slapping her, Annie stayed away from home for five days. She roomed with some of her friends in a vacant apartment, managed by a friend of hers. She claimed she did not remember much of it since she was drunk much of the time. "Eventually, I knew I had to go home, right? I had no money, no food, no clothes" (04.22.93.05).

Annie seemed very happy, however, that her mom allowed her to make her own rules. Annie said that her mother no longer believed in punishment (05.10.93.16). She beamed when she told the other members of the group that she had no curfew and the only chore she had to do was clean her bedroom. Once she informed us she cleaned up her room after about a month and jokingly added, "I can see the floor now."

Annie did not speak of her father often. When she did, the discussion usually included angry and hurtful stories about their time together as a new Canadian family.

> When we moved to Canada things just got worse. My dad got into drinking and gambling and he was just a real asshole. And he never cheated on my mom but he got to be abusive to me and my mom and sometimes he'd hit me and hit my mom ... Like I remember when I was a little girl like at 3:00 a.m. ... I woke up and walked out [of the bedroom] and I saw my dad pin my mom down and he slapped

> her and I was just sitting there and I was crying. I couldn't do anything so I went back to sleep ... It's like a traumatic experience for me ... And then he got into drinking and gambling. He gambled everything of ours ... When we first came to Canada ... we got a nice house and beautiful furniture and everything. Then my dad started to gamble it and sold our furniture bit by bit ... He gambled off my mom's wedding ring. (04.22.93.05-06)

Annie's mother wanted to leave her husband after she realized she could not live with these behaviors. She felt she had no choice but to leave Annie behind after her husband threatened her. Consequently, Annie remained with her father for a while after her mom left. Annie said she was scared of living with him. Upon clarification she added, "When I was living with him he was really good to me, but I was really scared of him cause he was strict" (03.11.93.11). The life she had with him sounded confusing and difficult for a little girl. "When I lived with him [children from his other relationships] would send letters and ask for money all the time and like, like they never met him" (03.11.93.12).

Later, when he went on a vacation to Vietnam for a few months, Annie stayed with her mother. During this time, she decided that she preferred living with her mother and told her father about her decision when he returned. The next day he didn't pick her up from school, which he had previously done daily. Since then Annie has had no contact with this man she said she hated, "birthdays and Christmases, not even a phone call" (03.11.93.11).

Peers

Annie did not spend much time at home, except to sleep. Her social life was much more important to her. She spent a lot of time with Malory. Annie's relationship with Malory was very special. They did many things together including going out, spending time with the same group and going to have coffee together.

Both Annie and Malory spent time with a group of "Orientals," composed mostly of men. While Malory advocated that "they're not a gang," both she and Annie explained that "they like fighting" and "they stick up for each other." Some of the members of the group even "fight dirty" by using pool cues, bats, knives, machetes and other weapons (04.29.93.13). Annie enjoyed many hours with this group. "They know how to have fun," she contended. However, there were times when she got annoyed with them. One time when they were at Goose Loonies, a local nightclub, some of these young men got into a fight and got kicked out by the management. Because she was riding with them, Annie felt she had to leave with them. She was especially angry because she was having a great time that night.

Annie complained fervently that she had been too gullible in the past. Her peers pressured her into doing many things. She explained, "everything that's happened to me has been peer pressure" (04.29.93.11). She claimed that she smoked cigarettes, experimented with drugs and shoplifted because of the pressure she felt from people with whom she chose to spend her time. Annie admitted to drinking "with older friends. Sometimes a little bit but not too much." Later she confessed that she was drunk a few times (03.25.93.02). Even though Annie was coerced into doing things she did not want to do, she told me, on another occasion, her friends respected her choices by not interfering with the decisions she made. When she told me this, I immediately thought about how others influenced her in her past. I was uncertain about the conflicts these two stories suggested.

Annie explained how she respected her friends' choices by keeping her opinions about what her friends do, to herself. She added, though, that there have been exceptions. For example, she told a story of a friend who was troubled. At first, Annie did not want to say anything to her friend for fear she would hurt her friend. However, later Annie decided she needed to say something in order to help her friend" (04.05.93.08).

Even though her friends no longer pressured her to do things she was not interested in doing, there was pressure that was self induced. Annie contended that it was important for her to act in a way that was appropriate to the group of people she was with. "You also have to fit in with whoever you want to be around. Like if you want to be around older people then you have to act older" (04.19.93.10). I believe this is a type of peer pressure that is not as obvious, since she felt she needed to 'be' a specific way in order to fit in.

School

Annie indicated often that, until this year, she had been a conscientious student. "I used to be good in school but then this year I went down" (03.11.93.06). "Last year I had between 95 and 98 [percent] then all of a sudden I'm getting in the 70s" (03.11.93.08). She confessed that the reason for this was that she did not study (03.11.93.07). School and homework were not usually priorities with Annie. She chose, instead, to be with her peers.

Especially during the first few weeks of conversation, Annie used her energy elsewhere. She said it was hard to keep up with her school work.

> My marks are dropping big time, like all last term I haven't handed in one assignment ... I can't remember the last time I handed in an assignment ... I just don't have the time, like I'm never home and when I get home I'm tired. I mean I fall asleep by doing homework, so I never finish. (04.19.93.09)

However, I saw a change come over Annie toward the end of this very important ninth year. "We're going into high school next year and marks count" (04.19.93.10) was what I heard often when we spoke about grades. In the last two months of the research, she completed her assignments and she often expressed the necessity to work extremely hard until the end of the school year. Annie also spoke for her whole class when she said "we were bad in grade 7 ... In grade 8 we were pretty bad too. But this year we're like so serious" (05.13.93.09).

The following discussion, which took place in the public library during school time, indicated to me how important it was for Annie to work on her grades. "I want to ace all the assignments cause I want to get really high the next term. That's why I need this [VCR tape on boosting brain power]." She also said she would be more motivated if she worked with a friend. "So if we work together maybe we can encourage each other" (04.22.93.02). In the last half of our time together Annie completed her assignments. She indicated her value of completing her schooling and going on to do post-secondary work when she told me

> the people I hang out with are weird. Like they say how much they hate school and they skip it all the time ... If they could just put up with it for a few years and then get out and never have to go to school again ... I'm like filling my whole time table up with courses right ... and figuring out how fast I can finish high school so I can take like a two year break maybe and go to university ... I have no idea of what I want to be, and going to university gives me more options ... I wanted to go to Harvard when I was in grade 7 or 8 when I got the good marks. (04.22.93.03)

In her relationships with other people in the school, Annie held some resentment towards some of the teachers in her past. She told me that one of her teachers choked her once and made fun of her name.

There were also teachers Annie enjoyed and admired. She talked about Mr. L. being "the best teacher and we went to grade seven [the next grade] and we didn't want to go to the class cause Mr. L. wasn't teaching anymore" (05.13.93.06).

For Annie, going to school meant getting good grades so she was able to do what she wanted when she was finished. The people in her school, teachers and students, for the most part, did not mean very much to her.

Relationships with Young Men

Many times the subject of men would come up in our group conversations. During one conversation each person in the group talked about what characteristics they liked in a man and about what was important in a relationship with a man. Annie showed acceptance when she said, "Sometimes you can learn to like him. Just give him a chance. If you don't like him then it won't work out. But you might learn to like him" (04.08.93.04). Also, she defended young men her age after Malory claimed that "they're all like kids" by responding "not really, there are some [good ones] around" (03.01.93.08). During one discussion where she talked about her ideal man, Annie explained

> he has to be nice to me and [have] a good personality, good looking ... I like him to have an ego ... He likes weight lifting and going out with his friends but still has enough time for you, has to be someone you can talk to and athletic and good dresser .... Sometimes you're other things before friends but being friends is good cause you can talk to him better ... And I don't want him to be a dead beat for the rest of his life ... [By 'dead beat' meaning] no job, but sits on the couch while you clean the house. (04.26.93.07)

Later in a conversation regarding sex, Annie stated that a young woman should "have sex when [she's] ready to take on the responsibilities ... [of] getting pregnant or STDs" (04.26.93.09). When we talked about sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) Annie commented that "you should have a condom unless you know he is a virgin and you are a virgin. But you should know that" (04.26.93.10).

In our private conversations, Annie talked about a past relationship she had with a young man. Upon her reflection of this relationship with Cameron, she indicated she did not treat him well and wished he would want to date her again.

The only other young man Annie spoke about, besides her friends, was Devon, a classmate with whom she spent some time at her school camping trip. The other young women in the group teased her about some of the events that took place during those two days. During a walk in the woods, Annie was attracted to this young man.

> I fell in the bushes and then Devon comes and all I see [are] my friends walking past me like it didn't happen and they're laughing their heads off and Devon comes running up to me like a freak or something ... He like 'Annie, Annie, Annie' and then comes up to me and goes and asks me if I'm okay and tells me I'm stupid ... He was laughing at me. (05.10.93.08)

The other young women continued to tease her during this conversation but she claimed "we were just like cuddling, that's all" during the bus ride back to school. Later she admitted,

> Well, I just wanted to snuggle under the blanket and everything right and then I don't know, we were just holding hands, and everything and I was curious to see what he would do ... I just wanted to see his reaction, that's all ... I'm not kinky, I'm just, I don't know what in the world possessed me to do it but it was just impulse ... He was like resting his head on my shoulder and all of a sudden, 'Huh!' Then, I don't know, he just like he put his head back on my shoulder. (05.10.93.24)

Her state of curiosity over this new relationship changed quickly to one of confusion. "On Thursday we were like together, and most of Friday morning we were like ignoring each other until the bus ride and then, and then today we're ignoring each other again so I don't know what's going on between us" (05.10.93.23). Later in the week she included in a letter, "Devon is ignoring me now and it's really pissing me off. Now I'm determined to make him mind. I don't like being rejected. I think I'll just ... use all my efforts on Devon. When people don't want me, I'll just like them more. Problem is, I don't know if I'll still like him when I got him. Oh well, it's worth a try" (Letter from Annie, May 13, 1993).

Annie's experiences with young men seemed confusing and unstable. When she had a relationship with Cameron, she did not want to stay with him. After some time lapsed and after Cameron was seeing another young woman, Annie decided she made a mistake by not being with him. This confusion led to her brief relationship with Devon. At first, the time with Devon was exciting but, later, when he became distant and inattentive, she became frustrated.

Learning from the World Around Her

One day Annie came to the conversation group wearing an anti-racist pin on her shirt. She expressed her concern about a fight that started at Eaton's Centre between a white man and a black man. Apparently, "this cop pulled [only] the black guy and everyone got mad and they started to, you know, destroy the whole place, at the movies" (03.25.93.05). She was angry with these police officers, whom she perceived to be racist. She often said she was not racist. However, when asked what an ideal man would be for her, she responded "Oriental." From this response, I was not certain what the word 'racist' meant for her.

During the times Annie spoke about the behavior of others, she was very understanding and was able to justify human actions. For example, when we discussed the delinquent behavior of a character in one of the books we read she explained how "most kids just do that to get attention." Her solutions to punishing young offenders were "juvenile hall" or "send them far away [to] isolate them" (04.05.93.05).

One conversation dealt with teenage pregnancy. Annie explained how her perspective changed regarding this topic.

> Well, right now I'd get an abortion, but um, if I was a little older and if I had the support of a guy and my mother's support then I'd probably keep it, cause I don't know, before I was like, abortion was the greatest thing ever invented. But then I met some friends that kind of changed my mind. Like I know a girl who's 16 now, and she was pregnant when she was 14 and she kept the baby and her boyfriend supported her and her parents supported her. (04.26.93.13)

At the end of one of our last group discussions, Annie handed me a poem. She had not written a poem for many weeks before this one. When she handed it to me she made it very clear that the poem was about someone she knew and not about her.

Shattered
Crying tears of shame tonight
Trying to overcome my fear of night
Look deep into my hollow eyes
And see for yourself my life of lies
Seek the memories worth seeking for
But don't look for things that hurt you more
For they will kill and take your pride
Take innocence away you've set aside
They say tomorrow won't be the same
Even though they say you're not to blame
But when I look into that mirror of mine
The truth comes out and I'm not so fine
I'm filthy, dirty, no longer pure
The price to pay, the pain I endure
There's nothing left worth living for
So I will go beyond the door
I'll look for light on the other side
And there I no longer have to hide
So good-bye cruel world now I'll escape
I'll leave you behind, along with my rape.

After I read this poem I thought about how desperate anyone could be after such a violation as this. How tragic it was that the victim's perception about escaping this horror was through suicide. I wondered what Annie's thoughts were when she wrote this. I wondered why she chose to write such a poem.

Fascination with the 'Supernatural'

Unusual stories fascinated Annie, especially 'true horrors.' Her fascination with the supernatural possibly originated from the story she told about her mother when they were in Vietnam.

> There's a bridge that crossed over [a little stream]. My mom went for a walk to the bridge. There was something in the water that caught her eye and it lured her to it. She went toward it and something grabbed her and pushed her into the water and the stream took her along and then she grabbed onto one of the piers. She got to safety ... When I was three ... the same thing happened to me ... I wandered off and I went to the bridge and looked down and mom came and she stopped me and told me not to look at the water. (04.05.93.08)

Annie also had conversations with peers about the supernatural, further extending her interest and anxiety. The following passage demonstrates her apprehension. "Me and [Malory] had a conversation about being possessed the other day, and after that I've been thinking 'Am I going to be possessed?' ... One day my voice changed, like really dramatically ... I get paranoid easily" (04.29.93.11). Annie also explained that "sometimes I just get too paranoid ... when I have trouble sleeping I think of supernatural things" (04.08.93.08). I got the sense that Annie was afraid about what she could not explain, especially when she believed it could affect her without her knowledge.

Her Poetry

Periodically throughout the research project, Annie gave me samples of her writing in the form of poetry. Her passion for writing poetry entered many conversations and consumed her at times. During one conversation, Annie was extremely upset that she had lost a poem she had written a day earlier. This cherished piece of work was a narrative poem for an assignment in her language arts class. "It was one of my best. It was the longest poem I've written. I spent all last night and most of this morning writing it" (05.03.93.10). When she discovered she had lost it she tried to recreate it but she had been unsuccessful in recapturing its essence. In one of the only letters she wrote, she explained, "As you may have noticed, I'm not writing many poems lately. I'm just not inspired somehow. Ever since the loss of what I think may have been my greatest poem of all time, my mind has just gone blank" (Letter, May 13, 1993).

Many times Annie created poetry for her assignments in school. Besides some of those included above, Annie constructed the following poem for a language arts assignment, which demonstrated her concern for the environment.

2006
I want to live to see year 2000 and six
Just to see if the Earth will be too damaged to fix
Will we still have blue skies and will green grass grow
What will be the consequence of the destruction we constantly show
Will we still be basking in the glory of the sun
Will we have an o-zone after all our fun is done
Will our pets be healthy, little kittens and barking dogs
Or will they be enraptured and eaten by the smog
Will we still be breathing fresh, pure clean air
Or will it be polluted with odors we can not bare
What about oil, coal, minerals and resources we can't live without
Will they all be gone? Is there any doubt?
On second thought I'll just enjoy the present day
Because I fear, in years to come the Earth will fade away.

In many ways, Annie lived her life day-by-day, for the experience of the moment. An example is when she chose being with her friends on school days when she also believed it was important to do school work to achieve better grades.

Dreams and Aspirations

Annie wished her life would change in her future. The pictures of her future were of her, a famous woman, with a family, which included one or two children and a husband. A good job is "something I want to do and get paid a lot and I want fame and husband and one or two kids, named Sammy or Annette" (05.03.93.06). Annie's thoughts during her last year of junior high school, for the most part, did not support her dreams since she valued living day-by-day rather than preparing herself to fulfill her dreams. She justified her attitude when she said she's only young once. Late in the school year, however, she began working harder for her marks and taking her schooling more seriously.

I often wondered about these conflicting stories, one told but another lived. I believe the dreams served as something to look forward to but Annie's actions did not seem to support the desired outcome. Was there not enough urgency to take a course of action which sustained the outcome, or, was this something too far into her future about which she may in the future take seriously?

Conflicts

The conflicts Annie had colored her perception and reality. During many of our discussions Annie spoke of the misunderstandings and disagreements she had with others. The conflicts ranged from conflicts with virtual strangers to conflicts with once-close friends. However, each conflict took on specific functions and affected her in different ways.

Many of the conflicts she had with others captured her focus and consumed her energy. One conversation, alarmingly, started out with the story of Tammy, a new student to the school, who wanted to fight Annie. Annie was distressed this young woman called her names and wanted to beat her up. "I didn't do anything to her" (03.25.93.04) and "I keep to myself except to a few of my friends ... I didn't talk to her at all when she first came cause I didn't like her. I'm kind of a snob when it comes to new people. But like I don't do anything to hurt her. She decided to dislike me. I didn't do anything" (03.25.93.5).

Another example of conflicts that consumed her was the power struggle between her and a manager at the Dairy Queen where she was employed. Annie was very disturbed by the way one of her managers treated her. "I do my best work and everything. He just doesn't like me but he adores Malory ... I'd quit right now but I don't want to give him the satisfaction. Cause that's what he probably wants me to do so I'll just work and work until I get 90 days" (05.27.93.12-13). He continued to wield his authority and showed he disapproved of her by giving her work not liked by others (i.e. cleaning up at the end of the evening), by cutting her hours to a minimum, by criticizing her in front of customers and by giving her least desirable shifts (i.e. weekend evenings).

> He's like always looking over my shoulder even though I'm not doing anything wrong. Like, once I made a mistake on the till, something easy that I could fix and everything, and then he apologizes to the customer for me and ... I could have fixed it in two seconds ... He says he's gonna fire all the slow people. I'm not really slow but it's just that he gets on my nerves and I'm not really in the mood for working hard. I don't know. I guess they could say I'm not working hard but everything is easy for me, you know, it's just that the boss, he intimidates me, you know. (05.27.93.13-14)

In the beginning, she maintained that she would stubbornly stay with her job even if she was not enjoying herself, to spite this manager. However, a few weeks later she decided to quit.

Another conflict she had was with Marissa, who was once Annie's closest friend. As mentioned earlier, Annie often told others she was fifteen instead of fourteen. This story of conflict involved Marissa's exposure of Annie's fabrication.

> Me and Malory like hanging around older people, like this 20 year old ... and then she's talking to one of my friends like he's 18 and he's the guy I'm practically in love with ... and Marissa like goes to that guy, "Why is Peggy [the 20-year-old]) hanging around with 14 year olds now?" and they all thought I was 15 and now I don't know. I hate her. I hate her so much ... It got me so mad when she said that, and you know that guy, like, it's not a crush, I really really like him a whole lot, and ... it's worse enough cause like 15 isn't old enough, right, cause they're all 18 and 20 ... and now he thinks that we're 14 and a bunch of liars. (04.15.93.04)

She regretted that she was no longer friends with Marissa, however. "I miss being friends with Marissa cause Malory isn't really in school. Then usually I'm alone and sometimes I miss being friends with Marissa. Then I always think I can't trust her anymore so how can I be friends with her?" (04.15.93.04).

Conflicts were abundant within her group of friends, as well. She often admitted to not being very happy with them since "they're into fights all the time. They got kicked out of Century [a pool hall], too. Everywhere we go they get into a fight. The other day they beat up a guy with pool sticks" (04.15.93.12). However, what she gained from belonging to the group kept her involved. "I always wanted to be a part of them cause they know how to have fun, you know. They go to places. They have fun" (04.15.93.12).

There were conflicts, too, that came from within. One such conflict was that she wished she was older. Many conversations included the fact that she was younger than other people she had befriended. She believed others thought she was less mature or capable of activities or thoughts typical of older youth or young adults. "I think they think we're stupid cause we're younger." This was a complaint with some of the conflicts Annie had with her mother. "Cause my mom says like, 'I've listened many more years than you have and I know that much more than you.' " She refused to accept what her mother had to say when she added, "this day and age we learn more in school than they did, so it's not like we're isolated from knowledge or anything" (04.19.93.04).

The Essence

Two weeks prior to the conclusion of our conversations, Annie admitted to what impacted me the most throughout the research. Annie disclosed that she was bulimic. (Unfortunately, this was the day my tape recorder malfunctioned). I was astonished that she had kept such a secret, especially when I believed she was not holding anything back. But, I guess I'm not really surprised, since, in telling this secret, Annie made herself extremely vulnerable. Nonetheless, this disease is essential in the story of Annie. When we talked about this disease Annie explained that Malory had 'forced' her to see a psychiatrist. I was pleased she felt confident enough to tell me about the bulimia but this also caused me to ask questions about other stories Annie chose to keep to herself.

I learned many things about this young woman for whom I quickly grew to care. Her honesty and openness in the research was appreciated. I found her poetry and stories to be fascinating, filled with emotion and passion. She is also a young woman looking toward a future filled with dreams of greatness and abundance. I hope the stories she kept from me will someday be told when she finds the space and the trust she needs.

⁂ *Chapter 7* ⁂

⁂ *MALORY* ⁂

The first time I met Malory I was not surprised to discover she had gone to modeling school. Her tall, lean body and near perfect complexion complemented the way she moved, the clothes she wore, and the hair styles she fashioned. Her manner and style seemed to contrast how she said her father "raised me like a boy, wearing sweats and big shirts all the time" (04.19.93.15).

I had a sense that Malory struggled a lot with what it meant to be female. Even though she had seemed to have a stereotyped idea about what a girl should act or dress like, she usually chose the non-stereotypical, except in dress. She consistently explained how much of a tomboy she was when she was younger and how interested she was in becoming a police officer. It seemed like she desperately wanted to hold on to the image she had of herself as a tomboy. I saw evidence of this attitude even in the first meeting. She challenged a comment made by Marissa who said "we get to say what we want to say" when she said, "Not everything ... swearing. We're not allowed to say whatever we want to. We can't swear" (03.01.93.03). In addition, she bragged about knowing "swears in Vietnamese, Spanish and Polish" (03.01.93.05). Using these words was not what might be termed as 'ladylike.' She was, however, influenced by other people and our culture to show herself as a 'beauty.' Her grandmother, for example, was one of these who influenced her in this way.

Malory struggled with not knowing how she should behave. On the one hand her father influenced her to dress like a boy and, on the other, her grandmother was eager to teach Malory proper manners so she would appear more ladylike.

⁂ ***Family*** ⁂

Malory, the youngest of two girls in her family, lived with her mother, her sister, Jessica, her sister's fiancee, James and her niece, Lindsey. They lived in a house only a few blocks from school. She, however, said she was often away from home, because she spent her time with her boyfriend at the local pool hall (03.22.93.05). She wanted to avoid the conflicts she had with both her mother and her sister. In a letter she wrote March 22, she expressed,

> My mom and sister are still close to me. We still talk but not as much. I [used] to talk to them when I had a problem but lately I don't tell them [anything]. I'm barely home anymore and when I am home I just go to my room and talk on the phone. Lately when I talk to them all we do is fight. So for right now, I think it's better to live our own lives and stay out of each other's way.

In a subsequent letter, after I had responded in a letter to her conflict with her family, she replied,

> My mom will listen but I just don't talk to my mom about my life anymore. I know I should. At least she's willing to listen. Most of my friends' moms won't

> listen to them and my friends say I'm lucky to have such a nice, understanding mom. But I guess you don't realize how lucky you are until you lose it or almost lose it. Don't get me wrong, I love my mom. (Letter, 03.25.93)

Also, at times she felt quite overwhelmed with other people in her home.

> In my house everyone's always home. It's a zoo. Like people walk in and out of my room. No one ever knocks anymore. They just walk in. My sister and the baby are always home and if they go out, my mom is home and James and his family come over and his sister stays there all day. Drives me nuts ... I can't go nowhere except when I take a bath and I tell them I got to go. It's the only room with a lock in it. (03.18.93.05)

Even though she complained about being overwhelmed and being in conflict with her family, Malory often spoke positively of her mother. She bragged that her mother was smart and capable.

> My mommy was a goodie-goodie. She was a brain ... The only thing my mom did bad was marry my dad ... My grandparents disowned her from that. Otherwise she was a brain. She was like 90 average. I read her high school year book. She sounds like such a geek. Oh, the president of the school. They're saying all this good stuff about her and all these clubs she was involved in. (05.10.93.19)

In another conversation she boasted, "[A computer company was] only looking for one woman to take the course and ten men and ... she got it. That's cause she's smarter than hell" (05.13.93.15). During one conversation, in response to another young woman's comment about being embarrassed to have her mother pick her up from a night club, Malory expressed, "Just cause you're embarrassed with your mom doesn't mean I'm embarrassed with my mommy. I went shopping with my mommy yesterday. I love my mommy" (04.15.93.02). When Malory talked about her mother, I could tell she meant what she said about her mother. She seemed very proud of her mother and appreciated her understanding.

Malory was pleased to tell us that she could talk to her mother about anything (06.17.93.11). For example, in a conversation I asked from whom did these young women learn about sex. Malory was the only one to respond that her mother taught her (06.17.93.12).

The conflict, however, remained when Malory was punished by her mother. Malory commented that her mom just yells. Malory's mother had tried to use grounding to discipline Malory but that did not always work. Malory indicated this when she said, "They say I'm grounded but I just walk out of the house and that's the end of it." She added that her mom teased her concerning grounding. "My mom said next time she's gonna ground me, she's gonna go out and leave me home. That way I can't drive her nuts, like usual" (05.10.93.16). One of Malory's stories, though, told of a time that her mother was too angry to yell.

> We used to live by a ravine. It was a bad ravine. Like my sister got chased by a naked man. And I wasn't supposed to be in there ... and I wanted to see what it

> was like so my friend convinced me to go and my mom told me to stay away from the ravine and I went down into the ravine and came back like three hours later. My mommy, I'd never seen her so mad at me. She told me, "Go to your room." "What's wrong, Mom?" "Go to your room, now!" She didn't want to talk. She was too mad. Usually she'll yell but she was so mad she couldn't talk. And then I heard her. She was outside and I heard her yelling and I'm like, "Oh, oh" and I started crying and then she forgave me. (05.10.93.20)

Her sister, Jessica, two years older than Malory, seemed to take the lead in many things and often seemed to be Malory's part-time surrogate parent. I sensed Malory had many mixed feelings toward her sister. There were times Malory complained about her sister and other times when she was proud of her. Malory also told many stories of times she was teased and tormented by Jessica.

> My sister was mean. She stole my Barbies and she'd torture my bear. I had a teddy bear I loved. She'd hang him. I'd come in my room and she'd have a rope around him hanging from the ceiling. Cause she knew it upset me. Cause I thought Honey Bear was real. She used to hang him from doors and ceilings. Squish him ... My Honey Bear I had since I was born. My grandma gave it to me and I loved him and my grandma died and I always cherished that bear. My sister used to torture it. (04.15.93.05-06)

Some of Malory's stories indicated that Jessica was not always nurturing and caring. "You know my sister, they'd make her take care of me. Know what she would do? Take me to a mall and leave me there. She did that to me. I like sat in the food fair for like two hours and then she came back" (04.15.93.05). Malory also complained about her sister's yelling (05.03.93.09). These conflicts she had with her sister, compacted with those with her mother, caused Malory to choose to spend time with her friends instead. I got the sense there was too much yelling for Malory so she withdrew herself from it.

The first time Malory spoke positively about her sister was late in the research when, in a respectful way, she quoted her sister as saying, "You have to live a little to learn a lot" (05.31.93.02). This indicated to me that she listened to her sister's words. In this same conversation, Malory credited her sister for helping raise her. "I've always been a lot more strict than my friends cause of my sister. She used to teach me good from bad, who to talk to, who not to talk to. I know a lot of teenagers are pretty screwed up, on drugs and smoking. I smoke, that's all and I don't drink much" (05.31.93.02). Malory told another story about her sister.

> My sister coaxed me to kiss [a best friend in grade one]. She said, "Come on Malory. Don't you want to kiss a boy? Come on, kiss him." "No, you're just gonna tell Dad!" ... She's like, "Come on just kiss him." "No," and we went under the bridge and kissed. She saw and ran home and told my dad. My dad laughed at me and said I had a boyfriend and [made] fun of me ... My sister always tried to get me in trouble when I was little but I got her back when she was in junior high and I was in elementary ... I was like always with her everywhere she went. My

> dad made me go with her. Actually I wanted to go. She didn't want me to go. She was always up to no good. (05.13.93.13)

Malory seldom spoke about her father. He was in jail. She explained, "I don't know what for cause he's always getting arrested, though. He always lies to us and says these excuses we've heard a million times." She complained that, "he's an alcoholic" now, and she did not have the "chance to know what he was like without alcohol" (03.11.93.03). Later, she added, "My mom says that he was nice before he started drinking" (03.11.93.14). Because of his behavior, Malory's mother left her husband over two years prior to this research.

Malory seemed very angry with her father's behavior.

> My mommy was [a bank teller] for a long time and my dad made her quit ... She always lost her job cause of my stupid father ... She would have a really good job and he'd either make her quit it or lose it. He'd make her lose it if he was mad at her. He'd call her work and start trouble. At the bank she had to quit cause he was causing too much trouble and she didn't like it. It was kind of embarrassing for her so she had to quit. (05.13.93.15)

I believe her attitude toward her father permeated through to other men in her life. She often maintained that men were less intelligent than women and that she was "kind of prejudiced against guys" (04.19.93.12). She also mentioned her father when she said he teased her about having boyfriends and when she recited a poem written for her by Nikki called, "Good-bye Daddy" (06.07.93.06). This poem told of the bitterness she felt and how her father hurt her. (At her request, it is not included here.)

Peers

Malory spent much of her spare time with Annie and a group of people whose meeting place was a pool hall in the inner city. Even though she and Annie both said this group was not a gang, I had a difficult time believing this since they fought in groups and used weapons such as machetes, knives and guns. One evening Malory and Annie went out to teen night at Barry T's (a local nightclub) with them. They were kicked out that evening. "Everybody we were with started fighting. I come out of the bathroom and we were kicked out of Barry T's. I was not happy. I swore all the way home" (04.15.93.02). Later she said she regretted leaving the night club with them.

Malory found it "hard to keep saying 'no' [to drugs] cause [peers] keep pressuring you." When asked if peers were presently pressuring her to take drugs, Malory explained that "they used to, though, when I was in my old school. And like it's kind of hard to see all your friends doing it, and how messed up they get ... without begin tempted to use them yourself" (04.19.93.08). I got the sense this struggle with whether or not to take drugs was on-going and was something she feared.

Peer pressure affected her when she was younger, too. She told a story about a time when she was little.

> I used to be a tom-boy when I was little and I'd just hang out with boys cause I don't know, I was more like a boy ... One girl was rich and she was like the popular leader of the crowd, you know, and she had all these fancy little dresses and frills and stuff and used to call me poor. I looked funny. She said I couldn't dress like a girl cause I had no money ... She hated me and ... she would make fun of me ... 'You have no friends. The only people that would be friends with you are boys. Cause you're an ugly little boy.' She used to call me a little boy. Like it kind of affects the way you grow up too, like what other little kids say and think. I started dressing like a girl. I started being like a girl. (04.19.93.11)

I was very impressed with Malory's candidness regarding peer pressure. The influence her peers had on her seemed immense. However, I saw Malory as strong and powerful. She seemed to be in complete control and, as well, admitted to being a manipulator. I continue to question Malory's attempts at influencing those around her as well. The roles seemed to be reversed, from the one being manipulated to the one being the manipulator.

Female Friends

Just prior to the research, Malory and Annie became very close friends. They felt comfortable disclosing anything to each other. They often did things together, like spend time at Malory's, go out for coffee, and go out to night clubs. In the research, they chose to stay together in the room during their one-on-one talks. They were certain they could say anything in front of each other.

During a one-on-one discussion, Malory said that for someone to support her they must be there for her physically and "at least pretend to be interested" (05.31.93). She did not expect support from her friends. "I really don't ask much from my friends. Like I'll do what I can to help my friends when they're in trouble, or when they're upset or if they have a problem. But I don't really, like I don't really, I don't exactly expect it in return" (05.31.93.03).

Malory and Annie seemed very close, but I questioned whether or not the relationship would last very long since Malory's past experiences with close friends often ended in distrust. Once she lost a person's trust she said she could never be friends again. She explained how she and Nikki, once one of her best friends, did not talk anymore. She reflected on Nikki's comments to her that she had changed recently. "I'm not sure that I want to talk to her again. Maybe she's right. Maybe I did change. I don't know. I don't think I have. She said I changed cause of my boyfriend and because I'm hanging around new people" (Malory's Journal, 03.15.93). I felt perhaps Malory wanted to distance herself from Nikki, who was not accepting of what Malory chose to do.

Marissa, Nikki and Paula used to be close with Malory. In a letter, she wrote about these relationships.

> I stopped talking to Marissa because she said bad things about me and Annie ... Nikki and I made up but I still don't trust her. We don't talk much to each other and once in awhile we'll go out but not very often ... I guess I think that because all my friends are in high school. Nikki, Paula, and Marissa annoy me sometimes. We all used to be friends but now I feel I'm drifting apart from them. (Malory's Journal, 04.15)

Malory maintained that it was vital in her friendships to have "trust, just trusting that they won't lie and say things that I ask them not to say. I just want them to be honest" (04.08.93.09).

The Men in Malory's Life

Even though she was only fifteen years old at the time of the research, Malory had many male pursuers. She often spoke about past or present boyfriends, and other men interested in her. At the beginning of the research, she dated Jesse, who belonged to the group with whom Malory spent time. In the spring, however, Malory decided she did not want to see him any longer. Malory wrote a poem about her break-up with Jesse. She characterized herself as the Black Widow.

> *The Black Widow*
> *She's a black widow waiting to kill,*
> *They won't resist, they don't have the will.*
> *And once you're trapped in her web of lies,*
> *She'll love you and leave you to die.*
> *She's a cat and you're her toy,*
> *She can't be tied down, you'll never be her boy.*
> *She plays games with your mind,*
> *If you can't see it you must be blind.*
> *She knows when you cry,*
> *And she knows when you lie.*
> *She'll make you suffer with her wicked ways,*
> *She'll make sadness come to all your remaining days.*
> *She doesn't know what love means,*
> *She doesn't have a heart or so it seems.*
> *You think she makes you happy but that's just a dream,*
> *She'll fill your heart with pain and make you scream.*
> *Her ways are evil and cruel,*
> *You fell in love with her, you're such a fool.*
> *She'll love you and leave you, hurt you and deceive you,*
> *When she's gone, just give up, there's nothing you can do*
> *She'll make you cry throughout the night*
> *But she won't care cause she'll find another victim come the morning light.*
> (06.07.93.06)

When Malory read her poem, she seemed proud to boast of the coldness and insensitivity she showed to this man for whom she had once cared. I wonder what prompted Malory to create a poem such as this, a poem which shows her as being hardhearted.

One reason she no longer wanted to date Jesse was that she was interested in dating Tino, a young man she had dated one year earlier. During a one-on-one conversation, Malory and Annie explained this situation as being potentially risky.

> Val: Is there another guy who likes you?
> Malory: I like my ex-boyfriend ... A guy from a year ago ...
> Val: So this other guy has shown that he wants to go back with you? Or has told you?
> Malory: He said he still cares about me and wants to give me another chance, but I can't go out with him cause that would be like
> Annie: Killing him.
> Malory: Yeah, that would be like
> Annie: Murder.
> Malory: Murder, yeah.
> Val: What do you mean?
> Malory: ... It's like being married to the mob. You can't get away from them for a while ... They stick up for each other. And like Nikki was going out with [Jesse's] brother and she broke up with him and then she was with another guy ... they made her life hell cause she broke up with the guy.
> Annie: It's gonna be worse with her, cause they know her.
> Malory: ... And they will gang up on [Tino], cause it's never one-on-one fights, right, it's ten people against one.
> Annie: Ten?
> Malory: Kay, fifteen or twenty around there to one person. May as well put a sign on his back "Kill me now" ... It's just like being married to the mob.
> Annie: Yeah, can't get away from them.
> (04.29.93.13-14)

When I heard this story, I questioned the reasons Malory and Annie belonged to a 'group' which chose violent actions as solutions to problems which arose. I know Malory and Annie did not enjoy when they told these violent stories, and were angry when their friends got into fights in nightclubs and other places they went together. I remain curious.

One day when asked if she had ever turned down a young man's invitation Malory maintained that she preferred to say it straight out. She, however, contradicted herself when she explained, "if [men] don't take the hint the first time I make up excuses. 'I kind of like somebody else.' I think of all these excuses" (04.08.93.04).

The stories she told and the comments she made about boys and men were many times contradictory. It seemed like she enjoyed having boyfriends but rarely did she have many good things to say about males. Concerning young men her age she complained that "it's hard to find guys who are intelligent at our age. They're all like kids. They're little boys inside men's bodies"

(03.01.93.08). Another comment she made was that she did not want to have any boys of her own, when she has children. "No boys. Cause men are perverts - well boys are perverts" (03.22.93.03). I wondered about why she made that comment. What experiences did she have with boys that made her think of them as 'perverts'?

School

Malory claimed she did not like school even though she always managed to receive good marks. "Just being here" made her feel bad about herself in school (05.13.93.16). She did not indicate why, but upon further questioning she said she disliked most of her classes, especially social studies because she said the teacher was boring. She indicated that her favorite subject was science because she understood it (05.13.93.01). Her focus in school at the end of her ninth year was the "need to get my marks up ... Anything over 60 is fine" (03.11.93.07). It seemed to me Malory's main reason for being in school was because of the marks, rather than the experiences she could have.

The school stories Malory told were stories about power struggles and defiance. One story she told was about a teacher she had in grade one.

> My grade one teacher used to spank us. But I was too fast. I'd run like hell and I pissed her off, cause like I didn't like doing work and she didn't help me so I'd make little things of my work and I'd throw it at her and she would always know it was me and you'd see her running down the hall really fast and she'd be right after me but she was old and she couldn't catch me. (05.13.93.04)

When I heard Malory's school stories I could not help reflect upon these stories once lived, these stories that conjure up anger, resentment, confusion and frustration. These were the stories Malory lived.

Stories of Drugs and Alcohol

A discussion about using alcohol led Malory into talking about she and her friends who drink and get intoxicated. Even though she admitted to drinking, Malory contended that she did not "get drunk like Marjorie [who tried to jump off the balcony because] she thought she could fly." Her other stories included what she saw as amusing anecdotes where a friend "was dancing around with a lampshade on her head" and where "I like Christmas cause everyone's around and no one can see how much alcohol I consume. I go out and drink beer and champagne" (03.25.93.03). She was amused by these stories of drinking.

While she had no problems with drinking alcohol or being around people who drank, Malory had strong beliefs against taking drugs. As indicated earlier, there were times some of her peers pressured her into taking drugs. Except for being curious about what it would be like to take drugs, she boasted that she never tried them and had never wanted to. I believe the pressure her peers put on her was causing her to question herself. It seemed to me she was searching herself for reasons to abstain from drugs. For example, she told the story of this man she knows who "did acid everyday for a long time and now he's just a vegetable" (05.31.93.02). In one of our early meetings she also talked about her loss of faith in Mr. Rogers, the child entertainer, when she discovered he used drugs.

The Many Voices of Malory

Malory's voice changed drastically over the period of the research. She used different voices depending upon what effect she wanted from those around her.

Joker Voice

Many times Malory teased the others in a joking voice. She was witty when, after her Italian friend explained her grandmother had twelve children, she said "now I know why my daddy told me not to date Italians." Her perspective changed, however, and jokingly she said, "Do you get lots of presents? Ooo, I want a big family" (04.15.93.05). She also was witty when she said to Nikki, "We're a little Miss Cinderella aren't we?" (05.10.93.14) after Nikki explained she had many chores she was responsible for at home. There were others times, as well, when she added her humor to our conversation.

Supporter Voice

Malory's supporter voice primarily took the form of advising. Often her suggestions were straight-forward, simple and matter-of-fact. When Marissa complained about a 'guy' who kept wanting to go out with her, Malory suggested a few things like, "Tell him you got a boyfriend," "call him a pervert and ask him to leave you alone," or "tell him you're gay, then he'll leave you alone" (03.22.93.02). I was surprised when, in giving me advise about a personal relationship, she suggested I "show the guy what you're made of" and "that you're in control" (03.22.93.03).

In another situation, when Annie was being physically threatened by a young woman new to the school, Malory supported her close friend by being there with six others for a fight scheduled by the newcomer.

After Annie confessed about being bulimic Malory promptly "forced or bribed" (Annie, 05.31.93) her to go to the hospital. I believe Malory showed great devotion to and support of her friend, Annie.

Controller Voice

There were times when Malory did not hold back in telling people exactly what she thought of them. During one of the first meetings in the larger group she complained to Augustine that "we should tape your mouth shut" (03.01.93.04). I wonder if controlling Augustine in this manner helped Malory deal with Augustine's attitude about grades. Later, Malory expressed her dismay when Augustine complained when she got less than 100% in any assignments or exams. "She thinks it's so bad. Look at our marks. What does she think of them?" (03.18.93.04).

Something Malory said to me once, "I never really get mad, I just kind of get revenge" made me think about how some people deal with their anger (04.29.93.12). Perhaps she was being revengeful when she complained to Augustine. Was this the way she handled her resentment?

There were times, that Malory lashed out at people around her. She explained,

> I just get bitchy to whoever talks to me. I know it's not fair. I just say, "Sorry, I'm just in a bad mood, you know. It's not you or nothing." Cause sometimes I'll be nice when I'm mad cause I know it's not fair to treat others like that. Sometimes I just blow up and I just start yelling. I'll go, "I'm so sorry, it's not you." (04.15.93.10)

I admired Malory's candidness. Instead of hiding what she thought about other people, she just said it. An example was when she said she did not want the other young women in her class to join us. When asked for a reason she replied, "Lots of them I don't like ... I don't mind if Augustine comes. I don't like a lot of them." Because Marissa, Nikki, Paula and I wanted the others to join (Annie remained neutral), Malory's 'no' was overruled. She quickly replied, "I won't come that day" (04.19.93.05). However, the day the girls joined us, Malory decided to join us regardless of what she said earlier. I was glad she did.

This very determined young woman lived by the rule, "It's my way or no way" (04.29.93.12). I wonder how much her living out this rule was to blame for being kicked out of class one day when there was a substitute teacher in her classroom.

> I came into class late and we have a sub and Helen was sitting in my desk and so I go, "Move that's my desk." So she moved and then the sub said, "No, you go sit back there," and, "You sit where you're told to sit," and I go, "This is my desk and I'm sitting right where I am," and she goes, "No, move." I go, "No," and she goes, "Move," "No." "I make up the seating plan," and I go, "So, this is where I sit," and she goes, "You can move or you can get out," so I go, "See ya," and I walked out and then the principal sent me back to class. (06.07.93.07)

Malory was not willing to back down in this situation. She felt she had every right to her own desk among her classmates. When she told me the story, I felt she respected how the principal asked her to return.

Something that frightened me was Malory's anger. When she was 'assaulted' by others, she became outwardly furious. She told a story about wanting to beat up this younger student because he insulted her (05.31.93.03). I had never heard her fury before.

Innocent Voice

Many times I got the sense that Malory wanted to be a little girl. Malory's 'little girl' came out at the beginning of the research, when she easily admitted that, "I used to love [Mr. Rogers'] show until I found out my hero is a cocaine addict" (03.01.93.12). Another example was when she frequently referred to her mother as her 'mommy.' For example, one night when Annie had fallen asleep on Malory's bed, Malory expressed that "I was thinking of sleeping with my mommy but I'm a little old" (05.10.93.10). But earlier she admitted that, after a nightmare, "I was so scared I went to sleep with my mommy" (05.03.93.04). So this was her admission to me that when she needed to be nurtured, she felt free to go to her mother.

Manipulator Voice

During one conversation, Malory talked about her manipulative voice. "I'm a con artist," she began (04.29.93.11). It seemed important for her to tell me and important for me to hear. This admission, I believe, was a sign she did not want to hide this part of herself. She continued,

> Ever since I was little I used to con my dad; con everybody actually ... I used to watch my dad. He's good at conning people ... I used to be a real quiet kid; never used to talk much and hadn't very many friends except the guys ... I was just kind of scared if I'd say the wrong thing in front of my dad. He'd get mad so I just sat there and picked up all these words and learned how to do things really easy, so I know lots of big words that a lot of people don't know ... I also use charm. I manipulate people sometimes. I usually just manipulate. (04.29.93.12)

There is certainly a paradox for me when I think about what this young woman knows. All that she learned through observing her father, was amazing and almost pathetic. It is difficult for me to imagine a child learning such a curriculum especially when I believe young children should be learning a curriculum not nearly so destructive.

Voiceless

During many of our meetings Malory chose to remain silent in the large group. The first such meeting (March 15), Malory indicated her reluctance to be a part of the large group by sitting away from our discussion table and by talking only when asked a direct question. At those times, her voice was so quiet most of her words were inaudible for transcription. Only four sessions later, April 4th, Malory again remained silent except for one short response to a direct question. However, she always spoke when we were alone or when Annie joined us.

Malory's silences burned through me many times. This young woman who had so much to say was so quiet. I was most bothered when she said, "I have nothing to say about it" when our conversation led us into choosing books to read (03.15.93.09). Did she use this silence to help her sort through things? I was also curious if perhaps she used her silence to manipulate or control in a nonobstrusive way. If this is what she had attempted, it worked on me, since I felt troubled and I questioned her silence.

Malory learned what she needed to learn to get by at the time. Her many voices allowed her to remain in control. It seemed like she used the time she was 'forced' to remain silent to learn what she could learn. In this quiet space what did Malory learn about her voice? What could Malory, as a young child, have thought during the times she was 'forced' to stay silent?

Dreams and Aspirations

During many of our conversations, Malory expressed her desire to become a police officer. She indicated she was very well informed of the levels of education and training needed for this career. "You got to go through high school, have a high school diploma. Then you have to go to Grant MacEwan and take this police course. Then once you pass Grant MacEwan you have to take a written test, a mental test and a physical test" (04.08.93.01). On another occasion she said she was interested in helping people through being a police officer. When asked whether she thought it was a glamorous career, she responded, "No, pretty violent" (04.08.93.07).

Her desired career is not one usually chosen by girls. However, she sees her future as one told by many other girls her age. Malory said she wanted to be happy and rich. "I want to be married, have a career and a baby in ten years" (05.03.93.05). Here, again, lies another contradiction, another struggle between the voices of her father (raising Malory like a tomboy), and her grandmother (wanting her to act more ladylike).

Malory's Nature

Malory has many characteristics which she shared by using her many voices. Her image as a 'con-artist' was a powerful one. No doubt, she has manipulated and conned many people. But in the manipulating, what could she believe about herself? Her life was not a life of innocence and nurturing. Partly because of her family situation, she was forced to grow up quickly and be responsible in ways indicative of people perhaps ten years her senior. Her 'voice of innocence' escaped once in a while, which surprised me. She was not an adult at fifteen years old; it was still important for her to know that she could 'be as a child.'

The contradictions, however, gave me an idea about her confusion. To me, Malory struggled with the tension of not knowing which story she should be living out. Does she desire both stories for her own purposes or are they stories she wants to live for others?

Malory saw herself as a tomboy. Her dad raised her that way. She explained she had to learn to 'act like a lady.' Many of her stories told of that learning. The people who told her she should be that way were her grandmother (04.19.93.11), some of her peers (04.19.93.11) and the teachers in modeling school (05.31.93.01). Her struggle with being herself versus 'acting like a lady' or a 'tomboy' was obvious by the stories she told. Did it mean that she had to give up a part of herself to 'act like a lady' or a 'tomboy'? Which part would she have to give up? Her intelligence? Her wit? Her ingenuity? Did it mean she was not 'a lady' if she would not give up that part of herself that may be typically more masculine? In trying to act like a 'tomboy' did that mean she had to give up her femininity?

Chapter 8

MARISSA

Marissa, a beautiful, fine-boned young woman with long black hair, was the oldest in our conversation group. She was born in Vietnam and immigrated to Canada when she was six or seven years old. During the research she was sixteen, at least one year older than most other students in her classroom and in the research group. She often regretted not being in grade eleven with other sixteen year olds. "I feel stupid cause I was supposed to be in high school ... My parents treat me like a kid. If I was in high school they'd probably treat me like I was grown up" (04.19.03.07).

Marissa was extremely interested in joining the conversation group. "I think it'll be fun and not just cause we'll get to skip L.A. but we get to say what we want to say" (03.01.93.03). Even though she did not keep up with the reading we agreed upon, she continued to show her interest in the conversations by asking questions of the other participants and also by expressing her thoughts. In addition, she showed her faithfulness to the research purposes by revealing things about herself and her feelings in writing. Her letters were very expressive. When I asked her what she wanted included in the thesis she responded, "I like to spend time with my friends. I don't know, I like making people happy. I like making dinner for my parents" (04.05.93.12).

Family

Marissa had seven sisters and two brothers. In age, she was somewhere in the middle. Her dad, born in China, owned a watch repair shop and her mom, born in Vietnam, worked at a beauty salon. Because she was the oldest child living at home, Marissa was responsible for baby-sitting younger siblings while her parents worked.

Marissa's stories about her parents were stories familiar to my own during my adolescence. Like my parents, Marissa's parents were very protective of her and she became resentful that they did not allow her to do many things on her own. When she told me her stories, I resonated with her feelings of anger, frustration and animosity.

> Marissa: Oh, my parents are strict. It's like I'm living in hell, well, not hell but I don't know, I don't like it there.
>
> Val: You know when you talk, when I read all your stuff about your parents, your family, it really reminds me a lot about my family ... When I read or hear what you say, that was a lot like my parents. They were always busy. They never had time to do things with me or to do anything ...
>
> Marissa: I don't know. I always have to get picked up and everything. It's like, I don't know. It seems like I'm their little girl and they have to protect me ...
>
> Val: ... It always seemed like they never treated me like an adult. I was treated like I was just a kid. And I really resented it.

> Marissa: My mom always wants me to stay with her and it's like once I went to the mall and my friends were there. She wouldn't let me split up with her. She's like, "Stay here with me." ... When we even go to my uncle's place I'm like, "Why can't I stay home?" Cause it's so boring and my cousins are only 12 years old and down. It's like, what am I going to do there? They probably think someone's gonna break in and rape me.
>
> (06.14.93.04)

Marissa presented a possible alternative to the overprotection she felt from her parents. "It seems like if your parents let you out more, you seem to love them more and vice versa ... But my mom thinks ... I'm gonna be spoiled and hanging with a bad crowd and probably come home pregnant or something. That's what they think ... It seems like kids get along with their parents better if they're given more freedom" (06.14.93.04). These stories were familiar to me because I believe I told similar ones.

Marissa did not have a relationship with either parent, where she felt she could talk to them about anything. However, she felt she could talk more to her mother than her father. "I don't communicate with my father very often. We just talk sometimes and I don't really feel comfortable with him like I can't express myself. But it's better with my mom but still I can't say nothing" (Marissa's Journal, 03.22.93). Often Marissa expressed how her parents treated her like a child. She did not think she could defend herself openly. "I don't talk back and all that. So I just keep my mouth shut" (03.15.93.11).

As I heard Marissa's stories of relationships with her family, I was interested in how she shut her parents out of her thoughts. These, too, were stories familiar to me from my adolescence. She did not want to hurt their feelings. She respected them for what they provided for her and what they wanted for her future. In essence, she carefully selected what she told them, in order to gain their respect and trust. She withheld feelings of anger and resentment, depriving them of her true thoughts. Marissa felt bad when she hurt or disappointed them. For example, when she failed to pass her road test she said she felt bad since it cost her parents over $300 for her to take the course (05.10.93.01).

In addition, Marissa did not tell her parents that she had a boyfriend. One day I asked, "Why don't you tell [your parents] about Dean?" She responded, "Yeah, right (sarcastically). They won't let me. 'You're too young. Concentrate on your education. You're gonna be a bum. You're gonna go with him. You're gonna ruin your life.' And my dad would probably disapprove of it, 'You're too young' and all that" (06.14.93.04). Marissa remained silent concerning her relationship with Dean. I believe the disapproval she thought she'd get was the reason she didn't tell them. This silencing resulted in a story she told one day about what her mother said to her. "My mom's like, 'Are you gay?' I'm like, 'What?' 'Cause you and Nikki are so close. What if you become gay?' I'm like, 'Yeah, right' " (06.17.93.10).

Marissa felt her mother was not able to open up to her that easily, especially when it came to boyfriends or sex. "My mom, I don't know, she just told me this story how this girl, she had sex and her husband found out that she wasn't a virgin when they got married so like, every, I think he dumped her. I don't know. I think her point was not to have sex until you were married" (06.17.93.11).

In many ways, Marissa appeared to be living out her parents' wishes. However, there were stories she chose not to tell them. These stories were not ones she thought her parents would choose for her. For example, her parents did not know about her relationship with Dean. She also indicated she did not want her parents to see the thesis when it was finished (6.14.93.02).

They encouraged her to do things that would help her have a better future. "[Mom] just wants me to get good marks and then I can do whatever I want" (03.11.93.15). Later, she expressed, "But my mom said I have to work at the shop, at my dad's [watch] shop" during the summer (06.03.93.09). Regardless of how Marissa felt about working in her father's shop, her mother felt it would be important. Her mother seemed to have certain expectations of what Marissa would learn by working in the shop.

> Usually they speak in Chinese and I don't know how to and my mother wants me to go there to learn Chinese too. She thinks if I listen to them eventually I'll understand. So I'll just sit there. I don't know why they would pay me. I'll probably go for lunch with my dad. I don't know why they would pay me ... I'll just sit there. (06.03.93.10)

There were occasions when Marissa indicated that her parents were very understanding and supportive. Her parents provided her with driving lessons so she could get her driver's license. "I'm excited about my license but I'm nervous about my road test. I better do good. I don't want to disappoint both me and my parents" (Marissa's Journal, 04.08.93). When she did not pass her driver's test, she was disheartened. However, it seemed her parents were supportive and nurturing concerning the outcome. "My parents told me that it was okay and that I should get more practice. They were nice about that" (Marissa's Journal, 05.13.93).

Marissa yearned for more freedom. Her reasons were 'thoughtful' and focused on learning about people. "I have to start looking for a job. I need one badly cuz I feel guilty every time my parents give me money. And also if I get a job I would be out of the house more and maybe experience the world and see how people are, the different kinds of people, without my parents being there to hold my hand" (Marissa's Journal, 03.25.93). When she experienced the freedom she was very happy and proud.

In one of her first letters to me, Marissa expressed mixed feelings about caring for her siblings.

> Sometimes I feel left out because my friends have freedom and they go out a lot and I can't go out with them and I'm older than them. Sometimes I think that they

> are lucky because they are the only child or they are the youngest but sometimes I'm glad that I have my sisters and brothers. They are good company at times. (Marissa's Journal, 03.02.93)

Later she complained about the responsibility of taking care of younger siblings. "I really hate it when I have to babysit and not go out. It's really hard staying home when you know that there's people out there living their lives" (Marissa's Journal, 03.22.93). She often felt overwhelmed at home since the only time she could really be by herself was in the bathroom. The respect she had, however, for the members of her family kept her from complaining much even when "they're always in my room watching TV. They play cards, they eat, everything. Can't get them out of my room ... I tell them to get out of my room. They won't listen to me. And whenever I'm on the phone they don't shut up" (03.18.93.04).

The story of Marissa's earliest family memory led me into learning more about her family and a Vietnamese tradition. This, too, reminded me of my own family Christmases when I was young. This was the only time of year we met as a family, a time filled with songs, a lot of food, and reconnecting. When Marissa talked about her Christmases, my stories echoed hers.

> Marissa: I remember my uncle used to live in Saskatchewan and we used to go down and visit and we had Christmas with him and or if we would have Christmas here, we'd have a bunch of people in our family so someone would play Santa and pass out the presents and then we would open presents and all that. And also Chinese New Year they give little red packages. Yeah, we would all line up.
> Val: That's your earliest memory? You can always remember Christmases?
> Marissa: Yeah, Christmases are great.
> Val: Do you have a big meal?
> Marissa: Yeah, cause there are a lot of people in our family so the kids went to eat first and then the parents, because there are too many people.
> Val: Do you have any traditional foods that you eat at Christmas time?
> Marissa: Uh, New Years. Like soup and I don't know, eggs, cause like in Vietnam we used to have eggs at New Years.
> Val: Eggs for New Years?
> Marissa: Like eggs but brown eggs cause they're with sugar. You pour sugar in a pot right and you stir it and the sugar becomes brown.
> Val: Oh.
> Marissa: Then you season the eggs and you put them in and they taste really good. And they would eat them with paper rice or rice paper or whatever.
> (06.14.93.05)

I could tell that Marissa cared about her parents and her family. She knew they cared about her too. Unfortunately, she did not think she could talk to them about her feelings, so she shared them only with her friends.

Grade nine was an important and serious grade for all the young women in the group. Marissa complained her marks had dropped this year. "Last year if I got an 80 I'd be like 'Only 80?' but this year if I get 70 I'll be jumping" (05.13.93.16). She also expressed that in some classes, "I could get my grades up if I had another teacher. Last year when we had Mr. Donnel I did good in it. I don't like the way Mr. Harper teaches. I don't do good in it" (03.11.93.09).

Marissa often talked about how vital it was to better her grades this year so she could take ten courses in her tenth year. "I'm trying to get my grades up cause I want to take all the ten courses in school," and added urgency by saying, "I need to or I'll kill myself." She added a "no" possibly to indicate she was not to be taken seriously (03.11.93.05). In a letter, she expressed the same desire and added, "You see, I'm 16 and only in grade nine. That's bad so I'm kinda planning to finish high school in 2 1/2 years. So I really got to get my marks up or I'll die" (Marissa's Journal, 03.11.93).

When asked what she hated most about school, Marissa responded, "Tests ... I can't. I get too lazy to study for them" (05.13.93.10). Later, in a one-on-one conversation, Marissa talked about feeling anxious around exam time. She feared she would fail. She believed everyone should get high marks because when "you fail you feel so stupid" (05.13.93.16). In another one-on-one conversation, she fretted about a social test she would have later in the day. "I'm gonna fail my social test. Dean had my book and I thought I had it and I thought I brought it home but I brought home my science book, and I got all mixed up and I didn't study. Now I don't know what a revolution is" (05.13.93.20). She also expressed her anxiety a day after a math test. "I left one page blank cause it was so hard and so long. He gave us a two page double-sided. It was so long. We didn't have much time to do it ... I hate, like, when I'm having so much problem and then someone says, 'Wasn't that math test easy?' and I'm like whatever" (03.11.93.06). Math caused particular anxiety and she noted that science was "starting to have math involved in it too and it confuses me" (03.11.93.08).

She thought it was unfair when her teachers did not tell her what to expect on an exam.

> Yesterday I got my social test back and I got 10 out of 54. It wasn't fair because I left a whole page blank. I didn't know that we had to do that one. He never said nothing about it. And he told my boyfriend's class that we have to know all the regions and 1 or 2 states and so I studied that, but on the test he told us to name all the states so it's not fair. (Marissa's Journal, 03.15.93)

I suggested she talk to the teacher in order to indicate her dissatisfaction. She explained she did not want to talk to this teacher because "he [would] get mad and offended" (Marissa's Journal, 03.15.93). Later she complained, "He doesn't even tell us what's in it and when he tells us what's in it [it's not on the exam] so it's not fair ... and we don't know what's important, you know. Cause he just mumbles, he talks and talks. And so no one pays attention" (04.05.93.02).

In weeks we spent together, Marissa often expressed a desire to raise her marks. Marissa sought extra help in math from a friend, Augustine, because she was having difficulties getting the grades she desired. With her friend's help and her intense concentration on math, Marissa was able to raise her mark in a subsequent exam. In addition, her close attention in social enabled her to raise her mark.

> Marissa: Oh, I got 80% on my math test.
> Val: Alright.
> Marissa: I went like 'Holy.'
> Val: Great. You must be really happy about that.
> Marissa: Yeah. I got 70% and then 80%.
> Val: 10%. That's awesome.
> Marissa: Yeah, we had a social test. Oh, I got 70% in my social too. Cause usually I'd fail.
> (06.03.93.09-10)

Marissa maintained that her favorite class was language arts because "it's easy" and that math and social were her worst subjects. She was looking forward to taking business education in high school in the fall because she expected to have her own business in the future. Even though two of her sisters were accountants, she did not want to study accounting because it involved too much math.

A school story Marissa will never forget is one when she was in grade one. This story of frustration and misunderstanding concerning this grade one teacher led her quickly into describing a grade four teacher for whom she cared.

> I had to go to the washroom. Ms. Fester made me go to the office ... She was inside, right, she was supposed to be supervising outside. No one was outside so me and my friend Nora, we just went to the washroom and we went out and we saw her and she made us go to the office ... But she was inside and I had to go and then like when I was in grade four there was like this student teacher. Her name was Ms. Smith and we were close even after she stopped teaching. We were to write letters and I don't know what her address is and I don't know where she is. (05.13.93.21)

I am not certain how these stories were related and why Marissa told them together but there was some sort of connection that, unfortunately, I never asked her to explain. A possible reason for her was to show there were teachers who cared about and nurtured her in a way which was respectful. As well, she could have wanted to let me know she could deeply connect with a teacher.

In our last conversation, she told a 'recess' story of abuse by other students. "It was snowing and Jack put snow in my mouth and he squeezed my nose and I couldn't breathe and they were throwing me in the snow and at that time the snow was so deep ... It was like so deep and he threw me in there" (06.17.93.17). This school story seemed quite traumatic to her and she could not forget this violation.

Humanitarian

Marissa seemed to be a great ally of those she valued and who she felt valued her. In the group she defended her friends a number of times. For example, during the first conversation, the participants in the research project were chosen. There were three who would not be involved in the research. However, they wished to participate for the remainder of this conversation. When the five who were chosen were asked if these three should remain, Marissa spoke up on their behalf, "Let them stay cause they want to stay" (03.01.93.13). She frequently defended the studious classmate who helped her in math. There were times when one or two of the other young women in the group complained about Augustine and said she complained when she did not receive 100%. Marissa defended her by saying, "But she deserves it because she studies, so it's okay if she rubs it in" (03.11.93.06).

Marissa often spoke about being sensitive to the feelings of those around her and alerted us when she thought others were not being sensitive. For example, she commented on a relationship between two characters in one of the short stories we read. Marissa said "it was kind of mean for the daughter [to tell her dad that the clothes he wears are ugly]. The way she talked was kind of mean" (03.15.93.07). Another time she showed how much she wanted to protect the feelings of others. When Nikki told the group that her mother wanted her to join the army so she wouldn't have to see her, Marissa responded, "Nikki, she was joking" (05.10.93.11). She was attempting to protect and support Nikki, her best friend at the time.

During a one-on-one conversation about what Marissa wanted included in the thesis, she indicated, "I like to spend time with my friends. I don't know. I like making people happy. I like making dinner for my parents" (04.05.93.12). Later she expressed, "It makes me feel really good when [I stick up for someone else] cause you did something right, not for yourself, but for others" (05.27.93.02). I was flattered when she supported me in getting a teaching job at her school. "Why don't you work here? Cause one of the teachers are retiring?" (05.27.93.03). Her comment indicated to me she cared about supporting me and thought I would be a competent teacher in her school.

Young Men

In describing what she liked in men, Marissa responded, "I like sweet guys. And a guy you can talk to [about] any of your problems and you be able to be open. You don't have to be afraid of him, mad and all that" (04.26.93.06). Marissa had been seeing the same young man, who was her age, for over a year. He had qualities she liked. Everyone seemed to like Dean, who appeared happy all the time. Marissa explained, "He has a good family, good friends, yeah, I don't see any reason for him to be sad" (06.14.93.03). She seemed proud to be dating Dean.

Because they were in different classrooms during the day, Marissa and Dean often sought each other's attention during their breaks. She indicated that she liked doing "anything [with Dean] as long as we're together" (04.26.93.09). On their first anniversary of dating, Marissa made it known to the group how surprised she was that the relationship lasted one year. In her journal she wrote, "I never thought we'd last that long. He got me roses and a balloon. We were supposed to go out but I wasn't able to. People say, 'Aren't you guys sick of each other?' And we just say, 'no' because that's the truth. I hope we'll last even longer" (Marissa's Journal, 04.15.93).

Marissa and Dean had many disagreements. In one of her first letters to me she wrote,

> I told you before that I have a boyfriend. He's really nice and everything but I always seem to get mad at him. I don't know why. Well, sometimes he says stupid things but sometimes it's no big deal but I still jump on his head. I don't want to always be mad at him. I don't know what to do. Do you have these kinds of problems? (Marissa's Journal, 03.02.93)

Others in our group confirmed the number of disagreements Marissa and Dean had. "It's not a day without them getting into a fight," or "It's not a relationship for them without getting into a fight," and Marissa responded, "That's what makes it fun, right? I know sometimes we fight and I don't even know what it is [about]" (04.26.93.03). Often she joked about arguing with Dean. For example once, when asked what she liked doing most with Dean, she responded, "I don't know, getting mad I guess." But later she explained the only thing that didn't feel good in the relationship with Dean was the fighting.

> It gets me mad. He gets me so frustrated sometimes when we fight. He always has to say sorry for me. Oh, when I try to look at things both ways, like my situation and his. And sometimes I think I'm wrong so I'll say sorry. Cause you can't, you know, be selfish, and just look at yourself ... Sometimes when he says things, he knows that it makes me mad. Sometimes you can't control your anger, sometimes and just says what comes to your mind. You just want to get to that person ... It's funny when you get into a fight [you] just want to nail (hurt) that person. Just get him good, and later you realize it was stupid to do that. (04.26.93.16)

There were times when I saw Marissa and Dean together. When they went camping with their school they seemed very happy to be able to spend many hours together.

◆ *Friendships* ◆

Marissa placed great value on friendships. It was extremely important for her to have people she trusted to talk to. "The only two people who I can really talk to are Nikki and Dean.

Oh, make it three and you" (Marissa's Journal, 03.22.93). I was honored when she included me in the same category as her boyfriend and her best friend. Marissa enjoyed having her friends come for sleep-overs. Nikki often stayed overnight at her place. Not until May, had Marissa ever stayed at anyone else's place for a sleep over. Both young women were excited that Marissa's parents agreed that Marissa could stay overnight at Nikki's.

Good friends are important to Marissa. When asked, "How about what makes you really strong?" she responded, "If I have people to support me. I guess I'm not really strong to stand alone. I need supporters" (05.27.93.02). Nikki was Marissa's best friend and both supported and respected one another.

Marissa also had conflicts with other classmates. At one time, she was friends with both Annie and Malory, but the relationships she had with these young women changed into adversarial ones. In May, the quality of the relationships shifted. After the camping trip, the walls they put up seemed to have vanished. There were fewer silences and more communication. Marissa wrote, "What you said about the 24th of June? I think it would be fun. I don't mind if Malory and Annie comes anymore. We are talking but not much. Whenever Malory talks to me, I just answer her. But at least I talk to her. So I'm not so bad after all" (Marissa's Journal, 05.19.93).

Marissa valued her friendships. This, I believe, was where she could talk about things she chose not to tell her family. She could be in the presence of people who cared about her and who would listen to her sort through her stories.

ꕥ *Ambitions* ꕥ

Marissa had many responsibilities at home and school. She took on added responsibilities so she could become more independent. She was proud when she could get privileges because of her age so she could be less dependent on other people. In April, she began taking driving lessons. "I'm starting my driving lessons after school. My mom says this guy yells a lot. She just told me to like listen to him" (04.05.93.11).

Marissa also wanted to get a job so she could be more independent. She wanted to buy a white jeep with the money she earned (04.08.93.05).

> I can't wait till I get my license. Hopefully then I'll be able to drive my parent's car. I want a jeep though. I have to start looking for a job. I need one badly cuz I feel guilty every time my parents give me money. And also if I get a job I would be out of the house more and maybe experience the world and see how people are. The different kinds of people. Without my parents being there to hold my hand. (Marissa's Journal, 03.25.93)

She wanted to work in a gift shop or other retail store while she was going to school. Eventually, she wrote, she would like to be a doctor. "I also really want to go to university. I want to be a doctor but the question really is - could I? Well I'm gonna try to get my marks up" (Marissa's Journal, 03.11.93). Later during our conversations, she claimed she wanted to own her own business "cause I think it will be fun" (04.05.93.12). The desire to be a doctor was never mentioned again. I wonder why.

One day we spoke about our fears and our dreams. When she finishes high school, Marissa feared two things: "If I can make money" and "if [I] can find a husband" (05.03.93.03). In her near future, she was afraid there were "too many people in high school" and feared it would be scary in grade ten (05.03.93.03). But she indicated, "I wish I was there like months in there already. It would be good to meet some new people" (06.03.93.10).

Concerning dreams, she simply said, "Love" (05.03.93.05). Later she expressed that one of her sisters is living out the story she would like to live.

> I want to move out and live with a friend as soon as possible. Cause like my sister has the perfect life. I think she's 20. She's going to university but like this summer, she doesn't go to school and it's like she's, she can bum around all day. She has a car and a place to live with her roommate and she has a boyfriend. She's got a good life. (06.14.93.04)

Marissa seemed like an ambitious young woman. She worked towards her goals, as indicated by getting the extra help in math, and was preparing herself for the story she would like to live.

Interest in the Researcher

Marissa seemed the most interested of the young women in asking me questions and in inviting me to extracurricular events. Some of her questions were about me and the research. "How is your book coming along? By when do you think you'll have it done?" (Marissa's Journal, 06.07.93). She also commented occasionally on the research. "The discussion today was really good because the topic was good and a lot of teenagers would want to know about it. So how was your weekend?" (Marissa's Journal, 04.25.93). Moreover, she expressed appreciation for comments I made in her journal. "Anyways thanks for the sympathy about my test" (Marissa's Journal, 05.13.93).

After she read what I had written in her chapter for the thesis she expressed appreciation, "You did a really good job on my chapter. Thanks for the time you spent on it" (Marissa's Journal, 05.19.93). I appreciated her comment, "I feel comfortable talking and writing to you. I guess it's because you understand and know that life isn't easy and that we all have our own little problems" (Marissa's Journal, 03.22.93). She had other questions concerning my personal life. "So how are things with you and Robert? Is it hard to date a person who has kids? Like wouldn't the kids be jealous?" (Marissa's Journal, 04.08.93).

Marissa was interested in matchmaking. She encouraged many matches. For example, Nikki claimed, "She's trying to get Mr. Andrews and my mom together" (04.22.93.07). During another conversation regarding Augustine she admitted, "It's funny, we're trying to fix her up with guys" (04.29.93.05). I was not exempt. When I said I was not dating anyone, Marissa was interested in setting me up. During our time together, she continued 'planting seeds' and encouraged me to date one of her teachers. She was relentless in her efforts on a number of occasions (For example, 06.14.93.02). "What do you think of Mr. Andrews?" she'd ask. "You guys make a cute couple" (04.22.93.07).

I was honored and pleased when she invited me into other parts of her life. She invited me to go camping with her and her school. "I hope you're going camping with us. It'll be fun and maybe you can even share the room with us. Cause Augustine might not be going" (Marissa's Journal, 04.25.93). I was also invited to grade nine graduation. "I hope that you'll be able to come to our graduation. It would be fun, I guess. But I would really like to see you there" (Marissa's Journal, 05.13.93). I was especially flattered when she wrote, "We don't have much classes together but I hope that we can still keep in touch. When you write back, would you give me your phone #. Sorry I lost it. But I still want to keep in touch. I don't want to lose a friend! P.S. Try coming to our graduation" (Marissa's Journal, 05.13.93).

Self Image

In her letters to me, Marissa often commented on how boring her life was because she could not go out very often. It concerned me when she continually blamed herself for her inadequacies when she complained about her inability to do things she deemed important. I was uncertain about how to respond to her self-criticism.

> My life is boring as usual. I can't wait to move out and finally have a life. My mom is sooo unreasonable. If I ask her to go somewhere and she says no, she can't even tell me why the answer is no. I hate that. And she says I always want to go out. She thinks going out 1 (one) time a week is too much. If you had a daughter would you allow her to go out or to even have a boyfriend at the age of 16? They treat me like I'm a kid. Sometimes I just wanna pack up and take off. But the problem is I don't know where to go. And I end up getting mad at myself thinking how useless I am. And I couldn't even earn my own money. But my older sister, she's 17. She makes her own money and doesn't have to depend on my parents for money. I'm so useless, I couldn't even get a job. Sorry for my sloppy writing and for complaining to you. (Marissa's Journal, 06.07.93)

Through her letter, I felt Marissa's frustration and understood her anxiety. I remember those feelings and my desire to have more freedom.

> Hi, how are you? I'm fine I guess. My life is boring though as usual but hopefully it'll be better in the summer. I can't believe I failed my road test. I'm so

> embarrassed and that woman was so hard on me. I screwed up on my parallel parking and she failed me right there. I didn't even get a chance to go on the road. I feel bad my parents had to waste so much money on me. I'm scared to take it again. I'm having trouble with my parallel parking. But my parents are afraid to let me drive. I really wished I had passed. It seems like I fucked up everything I do. Sorry for swearing. Well, I guess I have to go now, bye! (Marissa's Journal, 05.06.93).

When I look back at this letter I see words of sadness and failure. Even though her words touched me deeply, I am grateful for the space she used to express her sorrow. I know she will succeed at what she chooses to do; she has proven that.

She seemed quite hard on herself many times. I was very pleased, however, when she defended herself concerning her modeling portfolio which had been thrown out by the modeling studio without her permission (06.03.93.10-11).

ఆ *The Essence* ఆ

Marissa presents herself as a quiet, mature young woman. With a family who supports her ambition, she will be successful. With friends who support her emotionally, she will channel her feelings through them. She takes ownership for her actions, which helps her learn and flourish. Perhaps she was being a little too hard on herself. From all the young women, I believe Marissa was the one who enjoyed being in school the most. This was where she could connect with people her age and spend time with Dean. In getting to know Marissa, I could not stop myself from thinking how her life paralleled mine in many ways. I believe in getting to know more about her, I took the opportunity to know more about me when I was a young woman.

Part 3: Connections

Throughout the research, I made many connections with each young woman and observed the connections they made with each other. I followed the evolution of the relationships. Some behaviors seemed to create walls which halted any chance of intimacy and others seemed to help us become more intimate. I was interested in these behaviors and their consequences.

When our conversations were authentic, when they were perpetuated by the interest, eagerness and openness of the participants, I felt a group connection. Conversely, there were times when I felt I needed to maintain the conversations by asking questions which many times elicited artificial responses or when the participants chose to remain silent.

In listening to the girls' stories, stories of my own youth returned. In this way, I reconnected with the stories of my past and with my adolescence.

In this last part, I reflect upon these connections and the research process.

Chapter 9

RELATIONSHIPS

In this research, I was interested in creating a space where we could come together to talk about our lives and learn about ourselves and others. Being intimately involved with young women and a caring adult who would listen was what I felt could have helped me understand more about myself and others.

This research enabled new relationships to develop through our actions with, and our reactions to, each other. The young women knew each other when they became involved in the research. By knowing one another prior to the research, they were aware of each one's character. I came to each relationship without knowing any of the young women. It was important that I held each relationship separate from the others and to think about the conversation group as a relationship in itself.

It was important that I do what I could to set things up and allow the group and conversations to evolve. I wanted to honor all the participants so they would learn to trust me and the research process of conversation. It was important that we changed or canceled what was not working and continued or improved what was working. Through being sensitive to the young women, I honored those with whom I was in relationship.

I first began learning about these young women just prior to meeting them. Their teacher introduced me to their names and gave a very brief account of their country of origin (since most of them had immigrated), and the number of years they have been in Canada. He, however, did not tell me anything else about them. It was important that I find out from their stories and their voices firsthand.

When I am in a relationship with someone, I attend to her or him as an individual. When we first meet, we have no history of each other, no background - just a clean slate. As time goes by, I discover and collect the thoughts, feelings and stories of that person to create a portrait. In the same way, they learn about me.

To clearly be non-evaluative or non-judgmental would be unrealistic, however. We all have a "very natural tendency to judge, to evaluate, to approve or disapprove, the statement of the other person, or the other group" (Rogers, 1961, p. 333). One solution would be to listen with understanding thus accepting that person's point of view. This may be very difficult.

> [To] really understand another person in this way, if you are willing to enter his [or her] private world and see the way life appears to him [or her], without any attempt to make evaluative judgments, you run the risk of being changed yourself. You might see it his [or her] way, you might find yourself influenced in your attitudes or your personality. This risk of being changed is one of the most frightening prospects most of us can face. (p. 333)

Even though I tried to be open when getting to know the young women, I was aware I may have held preconceptions. I did not want my preconceptions to sabotage my relationships with any of the young women.

The first preconception I had was the picture I put in my head about working in a school in the inner city. In preparing for the research, I wanted to put my energies where they would be needed the most, so my intention of working with underprivileged young women was central. However, I did not want to have any expectations about the girls who would be involved in the research. I needed and wanted to be open to all possibilities.

The other preconceptions were my thoughts, conscious or subconscious, about the differing nationalities and countries of origins of the young women. I believe I am not prejudiced against people's differences. However, I needed to be aware of any thoughts or feelings that could color any of the relationships. I wanted to be respectful of each person's cultural and religious background.

It was also important for me to remember that the other members of the group would also hold their own preconceptions. I wondered what they thought about me, a white thirty-three year old female, who had once lived on a farm and who has a great interest in animals and education. Did they have preconceptions about the nature of a Caucasian female? Someone who is a pet-owner? Someone who was a teacher? Someone who lived on the farm?

In spending time together, we learned things about each other. The relationships I had with each of them were formed only by what I saw during the conversations as well as the times I joined them in other activities. I did not get much of a chance to see them interact with their family members and other peers.

The relationships I formed with them were very special. I reflected upon our interactions and my feelings about those interactions. I focused on the times when I felt closer and more accepted and also on the times when I was pushed away.

In this chapter I included my experiences and my thoughts about what helped us grow together and what behaviors pushed us away from each other. I was confused at times. I can only understand my truth about the relationships among the young women. In relating my experiences, I will tell what I saw and what I heard regarding the interactions between these young women and me.

Conflicts

There were many conflicts as we engaged in the research. These young women were often confused and angry. Most often conflicts were with their classmates and their parents. There were also conflicts with their teachers and friends. The conflict within the group was most difficult. These were the times when these young women turned away from each other, instead of coming together to learn about becoming more intimate with the other participants. I was worried that it would look like I was siding with one girl over the other. If that would happen I know I would lose the relationship. I needed to remain faithful to every young woman.

There were many behaviors that suggested to me there were conflicts. Some included ignoring the other person, side talking, note writing, talking to others about the conflict and using sarcasm. Sometimes I did not know how to manage it, so I let it be. However, there were times I confronted the behavior and expressed that I thought it damaged the relationships and the group conversations.

One of the main reasons for the one-on-one conversations was because of the conflict within the group and the silences it produced. Twice Paula, Nikki and Marissa talked with me without Annie and Malory. The first time was when we talked at the public library on April 22. The second time was an occasion when Annie and Malory were late (April 26). I did not know what to say or how to respond. I did not want to fall into siding with one 'group' or the other. I was there to listen, perhaps to help them come to their own solutions. For the most part, however, I did not encourage conversation about the others.

Since our conversation on April 19, Annie and Malory remained together during our one-on-one conversations. Annie was the first to say she wanted to stay during Malory's time with me. I struggled as to what to do, but, when Malory quickly agreed, I knew they should stay together for at least that conversation. I promised myself that if I believed that either of them were remaining silent because of the presence of the other, I would ask to see them privately. From this day until our last scheduled conversation on May 13, Annie and Malory remained together to talk. I remained clear, however, that each one would have their turn. The other person needed to remain quiet. They seemed happy with this arrangement. Occasionally they spoke of their conflicts with the others.

Sometimes the young women came singly to the one-on-one conversations to 'vent' their frustrations and anger. I remember one group conversation when Paula was exceptionally quiet. I was eager to speak to her about the cause. After the group conversation, I spoke with Nikki first. Here I learned about why Paula was so upset. The first thing Nikki told me was, "Paula's mad at me" (05.13.93.17). She then explained that Paula was angry because Justin, a classmate and Nikki's boyfriend, took her brother's belt. Nikki defended Justin when she said, "He was gonna give it back and he forgot to today." She told me how Paula ignored her in the hallway and how she said to Paula, "What did I do? I didn't do [anything]" (05.13.93.17).

After my discussion with Nikki, Paula came to talk. She explained that she was angry with Nikki because "when I ask Nikki to help she doesn't do anything. So she's no help" (05.13.93.19). At the next conversation, I noticed that Paula and Nikki were talking again and, later, I asked Paula about the belt and she told me that Justin returned it.

During these conversations I was a listener, not 'advice giver.' These young women respected that I was there to listen. I speculated that they needed to talk to come to their own solutions.

In the beginning of the research, there were conversations where I sensed conflict between girls in the group. I concluded this when there were many silences during the conversation or when I felt I needed to keep the conversation going by asking many questions. Also, there were times when the only authentic conversation was when two or three of the young women chose side-talking instead of talking to the whole group. During these conversations, the young women would not expand much when they contributed to the whole group conversation.

Midway during our conversation on April 15, I felt a thick deep wall between the girls and the whole group conversation. I felt I needed to do something. I felt resentful when Paula, Marissa and Nikki were side-talking and passing notes while Annie and Malory were talking. I confronted the situation. When I brought the conflict out into the open, the girls chose to respond in a way I was not expecting.

> Val: I don't know what I want to say here but I noticed there has been some conflict between you. I don't think you have been talking about what's on your mind.
> Paula: What do you mean by conflict? Argument?
> Val: Well conflict between people. This side against this side.
> Annie: No. No conflict.
> (Nikki made a shooting sound.)
> Val: I think it's impossible to have no conflict at all in our lives and we wouldn't be learning a lot. Sometimes I see you whispering and writing notes and that's fine but by writing notes and whispering you're not bringing out what you're thinking about to the group. I'm curious about why you're not bringing it out.
> Nikki: Cause we're used to writing notes.
> Paula: That's for sure.
> Val: It's fine to write notes but I guess when I think about the research, about what silences you and what helps you talk about things that are important to you then it's almost like this is giving me a demonstration of what's silencing you. The conflict is silencing you. Um, I don't know how we're going to solve that problem. I know there are things we can do to work on conflict, to talk about things ... to talk to the person you're in conflict with.
> (Paula and Nikki are side-talking.)
> Val: Or, start a new clean slate and start over again. There are a lot of ways. When I see how our world is with so many wars and fights. I don't think we should ever have wars or fight.
> Nikki: We're gonna die in 1997.
> Paula: Oh my God.
> Malory: Shut up already.
> Val: If we are gonna die in 1997 do we want to die fighting or do we want to die smiling.
> Paula: I want to die a virgin.

(Laughter)
(04.15.93.06-07)

Now, the result, the laughter from all members, was not what I had expected. I am uncertain as to why the girls responded the way they did. When I think about how I reacted to the situation and how the young women reacted to my reaction, I questioned whether or not there was any conflict. What I remember most about the piece of conversation leading up to the 'confrontation' was how I felt inside. I felt anger at the lack of respect they seemed to be showing each other. It was important to me that I responded in a way that would help stop the silences and help the young women participate in authentic conversation. The laughter was a powerful conclusion and, I believe, helped make light of the conflict I felt was between them. Did the laughter appropriately manage the conflict by making it seem unimportant? Or, was that an attempt to cover up the conflict and the feelings the conflict held? I am uncertain as to what the laughter accomplished, in this conflict. Subsequently, however, I did not feel the same wall.

Later during a one-on-one conversation, I learned about the conflict. This conflict was to last almost until the end of the school year. It concerned Marissa and Annie. These two young women had been very close friends from early on in grade school. This year, however, they had drifted apart. Marissa and Annie rarely spoke. What initiated the conflict, according to Annie, was something that Marissa said to another friend of Annie's. Annie was very angry with Marissa. The following excerpt describes Annie's perception.

> Notice I was kind of hinting at Marissa when we were talking about conflict? ... Well, do you know what Marissa did? ... [She told some older friends that I was fourteen.] They all thought I was fifteen and now I don't know, I hate her. I hate her so much ... But it goes deeper than that. It's like she resents me for hanging around with Malory cause me and her used to be really close friends and everything ... I've never been mad at Marissa before in my life ... Like that was a secret and I told her I don't know how many times never to tell anyone ... I even lied to people in school that I'm fifteen but then she thinks she's so much older than us ... I can't ever trust people that I lost their trust. Never. Like cause that trust is already gone. You can't ever get it back ... I miss being friends with Marissa cause Malory isn't really in school. Then usually I'm alone and sometimes I miss being friends with Marissa ... I'll always think I can't trust her anymore so how can I be friends with her? (04.15.93.10-11)

I felt sorry this relationship, once so close, had been lost. It seemed like Annie had many regrets about losing contact with Marissa.

Sarcasm was another way the girls dealt with their conflicts. Instead of resolving the conflicts by facing them, they sometimes used sarcasm as a way to offend or belittle.

One example was when Nikki and Malory used sarcasm in an insulting, hurtful manner.

> Nikki: Is it true, the last thing you look at before you deliver your baby ... it's gonna have that characteristic?

> Val: I never heard that before.
> Nikki: (Pointing to Malory) Her mom looked at a mental hospital.
> Malory: And your mom looked at a toilet.
> (Uncomfortable silence)
> (03.22.93.02)

Only a few minutes later, however, Malory seemed to make amends.

> Nikki: When I get in a fight with my mom I'm alone. It's like totally quiet.
> Malory: I'm on your side.
> Paula: Yeah, I'd come over.
> (03.22.93.03)

When communication is closed off, misunderstandings can occur and the relationship may change. Paula began feeling some resentment toward Malory, who was once a very close friend. Even though they talked to each other, Paula felt Malory did not want to be her friend any longer. "Now that she has her own boyfriend, she doesn't need us anymore. She only needs us when she needs things like homework done or 'I need to copy homework off you' and that's it" (04.26.93.17).

Malory's perception of the situation is different.

> Like Nikki, Paula and Marissa don't talk cause I don't know, [Annie and I are] starting to see older people. They act, it annoys me, so immature, like Marissa. She looks down on all of us cause we're younger but she acts immature. They get mad at me cause I hang out with older people ... Nikki used to talk to me all the time and now she doesn't talk to me. (04.08.93.03)

When I hear these stories I think about how misunderstandings occur when we choose to cut off authentic and intimate communication.

A shift, however, occurred after they got back from the camping trip. I do not know what happened. I want to believe that the conversation helped the relationships grow. I also believe that the atmosphere of the camping trip helped the rapport of the whole group. The shared experiences during the trip seemed very special and the girls talked about these experiences for weeks after they returned. It seemed to me, too, that the camaraderie of this time of year as grade nines was a time that could never be duplicated. This was a special time when these young women were leaving their childhood behind. Annie was the first to indicate the change when she wrote in her letter of May 13, "I guess you notice there is no longer war in your little group. Don't know what happened."

These changes in their relationships were talked about in our one-on-one conversations. Marissa was one of the first to talk about the change, after I asked her to comment on the relationships with others in the group. "Well, I used to hate Malory but I don't hate her much [any] more. She talks to me and I'll just answer her back and Annie, I'm talking to her now. Like we used to be real close until she started hanging around with Malory, but now I'm talking to her again" (05.27.93.01). Nikki also expressed the change when she said, "[Malory] talks to us ... We're talking" (05.27.93.07).

Other changes occurred according to a one-on-one conversation with Paula. "Nikki and Marissa, I think we got closer, cause me and Nikki were talking about it and like we talk more ... We know more things about each other ... And we learned what we don't like and what we do like" (05.27.93.10).

Intimacy/Teasing

The conversations certainly did not all contain conflict. We had many authentic exchanges of ideas, thoughts and feelings. Besides noticing actions that did not bring the group together, there were many activities and behaviors, initiated by both the girls and by outside sources, that brought the group together in cohesiveness and intimacy. The genuineness and spontaneity of many of these situations created a 'lightheartedness' that had the power to deepen the relationships. For example, sometimes when someone was getting teased and when someone would make a joke or say or do something funny, I felt a new revitalizing energy that enabled authentic conversation.

Teasing lightened the conversation and created a space where we could be playful. We had time to test our relationships with others or to enjoy the feeling laughter brought. It seemed like what made the teasing real to the one being teased was the little bit of truth that was embedded in it. The teasing was the kind that came from someone who used their energy to tickle and caress at the same time. Thinking back now, all the members of the group were 'the teased' and all members were 'the teasers.' I remember the fun in this caring atmosphere.

I think Paula was the biggest teaser. She was able to get away with teasing everyone. She made the most 'mileage' out of teasing Annie about Devon (05.10.93.02-09). Annie's reaction was lighthearted and we all had fun talking about her brief encounter with Devon. I also believe that Annie learned a great deal about her relationship with Devon. In her conversations with me, she seemed to be working through her questions about a possible relationship with him. I believe this light atmosphere helped her come to some conclusions about this relationship.

Likewise, Marissa was teased about a nickname she was given when she was younger, Marissa Mouse (04.05.93.08) and about what she looked like when she had her hair very short.

> Annie: (To Marissa) But you looked like a boy back then.
> Nikki: I could bring a picture of her in grade one.
> Marissa: No, that's okay Nikki.
> Malory: I saw it. Marissa, you kind of look the same except for the hair.
> Annie: That little bowl cut.
> Marissa: Shut up.
> Malory: Oh, you had a bowl cut too. (Speaking to Annie)
> Annie: Well, I was young then.

Malory: So was she.
(05.13.93.06)

An example of when Malory was teased began when we talked about privacy. Marissa and Malory claimed that the only time they had any privacy was when they were in the bathroom. This prompted Paula to tease Malory about keeping a rubber duck in her bathtub and singing the 'Rubber Ducky' song from Sesame Street (03.18.93.05). Malory denied having a rubber duck but admitted to singing the song.

Nikki's hearty appetite was also the source of teasing. At almost every conversation, she would bring food to eat.

Paula was teased about a picture Malory took of her. It appeared like Paula was going into the boy's bathroom. Paula and Malory argued about who would eventually keep the picture. Paula wanted to destroy it but Malory wanted to keep it to show everyone (06.17.93.04).

The teasing made me feel closer with the girls and it seemed like they had moments of intimacy because of the teasing. It created an atmosphere where we could be with one another without feeling tension.

Intimacy/Laughter

For me laughter creates a certain freedom. When I laugh, nothing else seems to matter at the time. The feeling I get from laughter is one of releasing negative energy in a light and fun way. There was a lot of laughter, that was not a part of teasing, during our conversations. We all shared in the initiation of the laughter and in enjoying it.

The first time in our conversations when there was hearty laughter was during the first conversation. Marissa said she was pleased to belong to the research group because, "We get to say what we want to say." Malory interjected with, "Not everything ... we're not allowed to say whatever we want to. We can't swear." The laughter that exploded as I went to close the door as I said, "Why not?" was extraordinarily gregarious (03.01.93.02). My intention was to show them we could talk about anything; no one else needed to hear us.

There were many other times during our conversations when we laughed. For example, after the camping trip in May, there seemed to be more laughing and lightness. The camping trip was the source of many experiences and stories. One, mentioned earlier (p. 72), was the story of Annie and Devon in the bushes. Another camping story was about a tampon.

Paula: And you perverts gave the guys tampons.
Nikki: Yeah, they're playing with tampons in the cabin.
Paula: You're sick. You guys disgust me.
Nikki: Devon comes in with the tampon thing.
Paula: And I threw it out the window.
Annie: They wanted a demonstration, okay!

Malory: Yeah, they saw it on our dresser cause Andrea brought it just in case somebody got their, you know.

Annie: And if they wanted a demonstration.

Malory: They go, "How does that thing work?" So we showed them.

Paula: Yeah, we heard you.

Annie: But we didn't like show them.

Malory: Demonstrate.

Annie: Yeah, demonstrate. We just showed them how we push it in and everything.

Nikki: Oh my God.

Paula: And then Devon walked in and jumped on my bed and grabbed it ... and showed me and I grabbed it and threw it into the woods somewhere.

Annie: Yeah, that would be exactly what a camper would like to see.

(Nikki laughs)

Annie: Let's walk in nature. Oh, look, there's a tampon.

Malory: Beautiful outdoors.

(05.10.93.17)

The energy during this conversation was extraordinary. It was as if we had a breakthrough in our relationships.

Shared Experiences

The camping trip was the event that helped the girls share in many experiences, and the conversation group was the place they could share the reliving and the retelling. The group conversation immediately following the camping trip was amazing. These young women brought in pictures from the camping trip. They reminisced and joked, remembered and relived (05.10.93.02). The stories called forth by the pictures held many thoughts, ideas and feelings. During this conversation, it was like friendships were born and reborn. Even though I did not participate in their stories of the pictures, I reveled in their love for life and their caring for each other.

Other activities also seemed to bring the group together. They included a dinner, the theater, their graduation and other field trips. These times were special since they involved something out of the ordinary. The students connected in ways that were irreplaceable during these activities. When we shared experiences, and then relived them in our conversation group, there was an excitement and energy which created more closeness.

We had planned for weeks to do something together. We finally managed to coordinate our schedules on Easter Friday to go to a Mandarin restaurant in the downtown. I picked up Nikki and Paula at their homes, fairly close to the restaurant. Annie and Malory agreed to meet us there. Unfortunately, Marissa, at the last minute, was unable to meet us. Even though we were only together for an hour, I thought this was a good opportunity to talk and interact without the tape recorder and without an agenda. Before the end of the research, I was interested in getting together again with the young women in the group. However, we were unable to coordinate our schedules.

After the camping trip, I was invited by Mr. Jones to join him and the grade nine students at the Chinook Theater to participate in an audience participation theater event. Members of the audience were chosen to be members of the cast. Of seven or eight cast members, five were from the CenterCity School. In addition, Mr. Jones was asked to participate. The shared laughter created an energy of love and caring where there may have been none or very little. I believe this helped the conversation group become closer.

One of the final planned school activities was the grade nine graduation. The students had family and friends around to help them celebrate the successful completion of their first nine years of school. It was a rite of passage to high school. In the morning, the students went to Mass with friends and family. This was a formal occasion so the young women were dressed in gowns and the young men in suits. Even though they tried to remain calm and cool, there was excitement in these young people. I was very honored to be asked to share this special time.

After Mass, there was a beautiful meal in a hotel close to CenterCity School. Here, the graduates celebrated with their peers and their parents or guardians. Unfortunately, some of them did not have family with them. Because the celebration was set from Friday morning to early afternoon, there were parents who could not take time away from their work. This was a time where families could meet their children's friends and teachers as well as other families.

A dance at the school followed the meal. The grade seven and eight students were invited to join in this part of the celebration. Almost all the grade nines, as well as some of the other students, were dancing with such enthusiasm and love for each other that I was inspired. "What a great group to send out into the world!" I reflected.

The two subsequent conversations followed the spirit of the activities in the sense that the research group was closer than at any other time in the research. Caring for one another was very evident in the conversations. Everyone seemed to listen intently and fully participate in the conversations.

Demonstrating Caring

In the last part of this chapter, I concentrate on loyalty, trust and faithfulness in relationships. Being faithful to each person, I believe, is part of caring, which in turns leads to empowerment and freedom. Noddings (1986) explained,

> from an alternative perspective - that of an ethic of caring - fidelity is not seen as faithfulness to duty or principle but as a direct response to individuals with whom one is in relation. Natural caring - the sort of response made when we want to care for another - establishes the ideal for ethical caring, and ethical caring

> imitates this ideal in its efforts to institute, maintain, or reestablish natural caring. (p. 497).

Noddings (1984) points out, there are many ways to 'care' for someone, which all depends on the 'cared-for' and the 'one caring.' "When my caring is directed to living things, I must consider their natures, ways of life, needs and desires. And, although I can never accomplish it entirely, I try to apprehend the reality of the other" (p. 14).

In the relationships with these young women I responded to both roles, as being the one 'cared-for' and the 'one caring.' Even though I went into the research to be the 'one caring,' I felt special when I was the one 'cared-for.' I felt valued and appreciated in these relationships.

Being the One Caring

I showed these young women I cared for them in many ways. It was important that I showed them I trusted them and that I appreciated who they were. I demonstrated I was the one caring in the following ways: I listened intently; I asked for input; I was supportive and encouraging; I made myself vulnerable by sharing personal stories; and I joined them in extra-curricular activities.

I believe I demonstrated trust by asking these young women for their opinions and thoughts about the research. It was important that we chose together how the research evolved. It was important that we shaped the research throughout its entirety. By not having them involved in the initial planning stage, I believe I lost an opportunity to show them I trusted them. However, I sought their input throughout the rest of the project.

I encouraged them to speak about what was important to them. During some of the conversations I felt I prompted them too much when there were too many silences. Other times we had authentic conversations, where I did not initiate by asking interview-type questions.

At times I negotiated with them. An example was when I asked them to choose books to read. It was difficult to select from those they recommended since they all recommended their own and the books they selected were not as accessible as others. Because it was difficult to choose one, I prepared a list of books (Appendix D) that were popular with youth and that we could have access to. I took the list to the girls, discussed it and asked, "Do you think you would be okay if I chose a book? You'd trust that I would choose something appropriate?" (03.15.93.09).

I also showed I cared by encouraging and supporting the girls in their endeavors, Annie in her poetry-writing, Paula in her sports, Nikki in her swimming, Marissa in her improving her marks in math and Malory in her employment.

One thing I enjoy a lot is bringing treats for people for whom I care. The first thing I shared were muffins I baked. Later, thanks to my own mother, I shared chocolate Easter eggs before the Easter break. For our first conversation with all the young women in the class, I brought gingerbread cookies.

Taking photos has always been very special to me. I believe this helped create rapport in classrooms where I taught. This was another way I demonstrated my caring during the research. Of course, I am not certain what these young women thought about posing in front of my camera. Their associations may not have been similar to mine. I hoped, however, that they understood my intentions. It was important that I took individual pictures on the first conversation (March 01) and a group picture at the end of the conversations (May 13). When I went to visit them at camp, I took many action snapshots which I later shared with them.

In the conversations I also shared stories that were important and personal. I felt I needed to do that to show I cared and, in turn, to help the relationships grow. It felt unusual to share things with young women I did not know well. But I knew I would learn something by what they connected with in my stories. One of the first stories I told was of being silenced in a university class (03.15.93.12). Another story was about a relationship I was having with a man (03.22.93.02).

I made myself vulnerable in another way by spontaneously joining their gym class after asking permission from their gym teacher (04.05.93). When the girls told me they were reviewing the Texas Line Dance, a dance I enjoyed when I was out with my own friends, I wanted to share a bit of fun with them.

It is easy for me to show I care but I find it difficult to say I care. I made myself very vulnerable when I told Marissa, "I really miss coming to talk with you guys. I miss that and I don't know if there's still a chance to do that" (05.27.93.01).

Occasionally there were times when I was uncomfortable with their stories. Even though I was uncomfortable, I wanted to actively listen to the person talking. I asked questions if I did not understand or I said things that put me into relationship with each person. I wanted them to know it was okay to talk about anything and also I wanted them to search for their own answers through talking. One such conversation was when Nikki, Paula and Marissa were trying to sort out their relationships with Malory and Annie (04.26.93.06). I felt like I was betraying Malory and Annie but I wanted to be faithful to the conversation. I think I compromised a little, however. I did not want to dwell on the conversation or advocate gossiping so I listened to the troubles they were having. I did not encourage the talk though. It felt too uncomfortable.

Another uncomfortable time for me was the conversation about sex and sexually transmitted diseases. To start, it was uncomfortable for me to ask questions about this subject. I made a breakthrough when Malory's response to protection from STDs sounded like textbook answers. It sounded like her answer was rehearsed. It seemed to me Malory did not believe what she had repeated.

Val: How about protection from STDs?
Malory: Condoms, abstinence.
Val: You sound like a textbook or something. What do you personally think?
Malory: Abstinence.
Val: From protection from STDs?
Malory: Yeah. That way if you don't have sex there's no getting STDs.
Val: Do you believe in that though?
Malory: No, I don't know if I do. I don't know, probably the best would be condoms, if you're gonna decide to do it, use condoms.
(04.26.93.11)

In looking at the transcript now, I wonder if I 'forced' Malory into saying something she did not want to say. I believe, though, that I responded appropriately by listening to the feeling I had at the time.

Being the One Cared For

There were times I felt like I was being the 'one cared for.' These times helped me feel more intimate and more valued in the relationships. I felt valued in the relationships when I was asked questions, when I was invited to special occasions, when I was complimented and when I was teased.

The questions I was asked took a variety of forms. One form was what I call 'inquiry questions.' These young women were genuinely interested in my life. They asked me questions about teaching, about boyfriends and about my feelings. Usually the inquiry questions stood alone. However, there were times when I was asked a number of questions in a sequence. The following inquiry was initiated by a discussion about what we wanted in our lives.

Val: I'd like to be teaching I think.
Annie: Why do you want to be a teacher?
Val: I am a real teacher.
Annie: I mean a teacher in front of a class.
Malory: You'll get gray hair real soon and a nervous breakdown.
Annie: I don't know how anyone would want to be a teacher unless they really like kids.
Paula: If you really want to be a teacher why are you taking this course?
Val: I couldn't get a job when I moved to Edmonton.
Marissa: You couldn't get a job here?
Val: I was in Bonnyville. I quit my job cause I didn't want to live there.
Annie: Did you always want to be a teacher?
Val: No, after I got married I was a teacher aide ... It became boring after awhile so that's when I decided to go to university.
Annie: What did you want to be when you were our age?
(04.08.93.06)

These questions indicated that the girls really wanted to know something more about me. It made me feel special.

Another form of questioning was what I call 'questions of invitation.' When I was invited, it helped me feel welcomed and valued. Some examples: "Are you coming to our grad?" (Marissa, 05.27.93.03); "Are you coming camping with us?" (Paula, 04.26.93.01); "You're gonna come to our grad, aren't you?" (Paula, 06.03.93.07).

There were times when I was complimented directly and indirectly. Indirect compliments embedded in other statements and in certain questions were other forms. For example, Paula complimented me when she said, "It's too bad you're not coming next year" (06.03.93.07). Marissa complimented me when she asked, "Why don't you work here? Cause one of the teachers are retiring" (05.27.93.03). I also felt complimented when Marissa asked, "Can I use you as a reference?" (05.27.93.02).

There were times when these young women asked my advice and also gave advice. I felt closer to them because this advice-seeking indicated to me that they valued my opinions and, by giving advice, they felt sure they could help me solve my problems.

Once when I told them of a disempowering university experience the girls gave me suggestions about handling the situation. In my attempt to sort out my feelings and to overcome the hurt, I told them of this experience. What followed were possible solutions to my problem and also stories that were demonstrative of similar situations.

> Val: ... Now when I see her I pretend she's not even there ... How is that showing I'm compassionate? I don't even know how to greet her. I tried to talk to her but she wasn't even going to listen to me.
> Malory: I'd give her dirty looks.
> Val: Maybe I'm getting her back by pretending she's not even there ... It doesn't make me feel good with the kind of person I am ...
> Paula: I don't think that person really cares.
> Val: But I can't change that she doesn't care.
> Nikki: Go to the principal and yell.
> Val: I did that.
> Nikki: Talk to the teacher.
> Val: I did once.
> Annie: Well, if it's gonna be that way you should just try and forget about it.
> Paula: Some teachers.
> Val: Sometimes I think that's her problem ...
> Malory: It reminds me of the woman at Save-On foods. She's really rude to my sister ... My sister goes to customer service and yells at the manager. It was better than the lady cause there was a line up with people and I would have been embarrassed. She was so upset she swore all the way home.
> Val: I have a problem when ... somebody acts like that ...
> Paula: Some people they do that and they get mad at something else and then take it out on people.

(04.15.93.09).

This exchange was an authentic one. I enjoyed it because we searched for answers together and considered other points of view. I felt cared for when we used conversation time to think about solutions for my problem.

Another time I felt cared for was in a conversation about pregnancy. Marissa asked, "Oh, Val if you have a boyfriend right and you're pregnant do you think it's fair for the boyfriend to know?" (04.26.93.03). Later in the same conversation, I asked the girls, "If you were pregnant right now what would you do?" After some exchanges, Marissa asked me, "Would you keep it, Val, if you were pregnant right now?" (04.26.93.13).

During our first recorded conversation, I felt interrogated about a man I was seeing. The girls asked me many questions about him and I felt obliged to answer. They wanted to know about this relationship and I thought I could only benefit by talking to them about it. I wanted to be honest and open with them. In doing so, I believe I opened a path for them to reciprocate. After a few minutes of questioning, Marissa expressed, "We sound like her parents." Paula added, "We do" (03.01.93.07).

I have always enjoyed teasing and being teased in a fun, jovial way. I am not certain that everyone does, but I noticed that the girls in the group were good at teasing and good at receiving teasing. When I was teased, I felt cared for, in the sense that they were using energy and time concentrating on me. For example, I was teased often about two of the male teachers at CenterCity School. The girls' desire to set me up with someone they knew was intense at times. Marissa, especially, was constantly trying to be my matchmaker.

Another time when we laughed was when I talked about my uncertainty about what I was going to do with my hair. I felt teased when Paula responded, "Chop it all off. Best thing you can do is shave it." After I replied, "Shave it. Thanks. I'll get it cut like my dad," Malory added, "Be grateful your dad still has hair" (04.19.93.01).

These times made me feel cared for. I went into the conversation being the 'one caring.' I did not intend to be the 'one cared for.' The relationships were not one-sided. I initially wanted to only listen to what these young women wanted to say. I now realize it would not have been an authentic relationship if I had not shared some of my life with these young women.

Faithfulness to Others

At all times I wanted to stay loyal to the intentions and purposes of the study. Throughout the research, what was at the forefront of all situations was the faithfulness to the young women. It was important that I listened attentively at all times and encouraged authentic discussion.

However, when the other young women joined us, I got the feeling that questions asked of guests were not authentic questions. Everyone already had the answers. I interrupted this conversation by asking questions about peer pressure.

> Marissa: Talk about your trip to Chile.
> Lorelei: Um, it was nice. It was different from here and I met a lot of friends and I got to know my family and
> Marissa: Did you meet a guy there?
> Lorelei: Sort of. We're just friends but we're just writing ... We're going back in August or September.
> Marissa: Can you stay there long?
> Augustine: Kay, we went to Europe one, two years ago ... and we took the bus to Calgary.
> Paula: Why'd you go to the Calgary airport?
> Augustine: Because that's where our plane was going from ... (talk about traveling around Europe) and then went to Transylvania.
> Paula: Isn't that where you were born?
> Augustine: Yes it is ...
> Val: Can I say something? Because earlier when I said something about peer pressure I think that it's a really important topic to talk about and I don't want to pressure anyone into saying anything that they're uncomfortable with but I'm still really interested in some of your stories so if you could think of a time, it could be long ago, it could be five years ago or it could be yesterday. Think of a time where you were pressured into saying something or not saying something that hurt you, that was not to your benefit.
> (04.29.93.07)

There were times during the research when I felt an obligation toward other people besides the girls, that is, times when my loyalty and care were directed toward others. Consideration for others indirectly involved with the research or with the young women was also important.

Because Mr. Jones played such a large part of enabling the research, I felt loyal to his wishes regarding the girls. From the beginning, he made it clear that the young women were required to complete all homework assignments and, if they could not keep up with the work, they could no longer belong to the group. In discussing this with the girls, I indicated it was important to honor Mr. Jones' wishes, since he was instrumental in us being together (05.27.93.08). Occasionally, Mr. Jones asked me to remind one or more of the girls to complete their work and threatened that he would not let them come if they did not complete the assignments.

To demonstrate fidelity to his wishes, I talked to the girls about a particular assignment, or I welcomed Mr. Jones to the conversation room to express his wishes (04.29.93.01-02). From the beginning of the research, I told the girls to take time away from the conversation to do their homework, if they needed time. I felt it was important for them to choose if they wanted to work in their classroom or in our conversation room. An example was when I said, "Did you guys need time to do your report? Do you want to do that here?" (04.26.93.08). I felt I was being faithful to them regarding their schooling by allowing them additional time if they needed it.

I felt an obligation to the young women's parents as well. I wanted to show faithfulness to them. One way I did that was contacting them by telephone at the beginning of the conversations. I talked with one parent from each family about what I wanted for the research and what we were doing during our conversations. It was also important that I not take sides when the girls told of a conflict or argument with their parents. I was there to help them deal with the conflict. I knew this was best for the girls' relationships with their parents, with each other and with me.

Prior to the first recorded conversation, I told all interested grade nine girls in the class that, with Mr. Jones' permission, we could get together every two weeks to talk. I wanted to be faithful to the other girls in the class. Even though I did not follow through twice each month, I was successful in convincing the girls in the group and Mr. Jones to have all the girls who were interested in the research join our group once. At our first meeting together Marissa suggested that we choose a topic as a whole group (04.29.93.01). This showed me she wanted to give the others the same experience we shared in our regular conversations. She, I believe, was staying faithful to everyone in the conversation.

At times there were even, what I call, mixed loyalties, where being faithful to one person or situation overruled another. I had to make a choice. Some were easier, and others were more difficult, especially when I chose someone or something over one or more of the young women in the group. This did not happen often but, when it did, I needed to go with what I thought was best for everyone. An example of being faithful to the wishes of a young woman and to the wishes of her parents is indicated in the story of Augustine.

A bright, energetic and very outgoing young woman in the girls' grade nine class was extremely interested in belonging to the research. Unfortunately, Augustine's family decided that it would be more valuable for her to be in the classroom. Friends with almost everyone in the classroom, she frequently greeted me and asked when she could come for a visit to the conversation group. On one other time, besides the April 29th conversation, she joined Nikki and I. This was an unscheduled talk on June 14. Both girls had completed their assignments before the others and Mr. Jones thought it would be okay for Augustine to join us. I was excited to have this young woman join us. In a way, I felt I was honoring her spirit by making a concerted effort of talking with her as often as I could justify without dishonoring her parents' wishes. I appreciated the opportunity to get to know her and it seemed like she appreciated it too.

There were times, as well, when I struggled with the intentions of the research over the wishes of Mr. Jones. I certainly understood his perspective about the young women completing their work, but thought, especially at the beginning, that some of the girls may not have been able to join us if they had not kept up with their work. This, however, turned out not to be a problem since the girls had completed all their assignments. On one other occasion, I had mixed loyalties. During one conversation, Malory was very hungry. She asked if we could all go to the store so she could buy something to eat. At first, I did not know how to respond. I did not want to be seen as an authority figure. Because she asked me, I felt she looked to me as an authority. I did not want to indicate by a 'yes' or 'no' because that may have implied I was acting as one. Here, I felt mixed loyalties, to the relationships with the girls and to respecting Mr. Jones' wishes that we stay in the school. While I did not specify whether or not the girls 'could' go, I managed to put the responsibility onto the girls for going through the appropriate channels to get permission.

The relationships in this research project have been very special. I learned a lot about these young women and about myself. The conversation space was designed so these young women could express their thoughts and feelings. It was important that the participants felt respected and cared for so they would trust the conversation process. Once they could trust the conversation they could exercise their authentic voices and explore empowerment. Being in a space where what we say is accepted and acknowledged by another helps build our self-esteem and allows us to learn and grow.

Chapter 10

Hearing the Voices

> Val: So in the research ... what do you want us to tell people about these topics? What do you want teachers or parents or the general public to know?
>
> Paula: That they have to listen to teenagers. Cause some of them, I don't know, they need to be listened to, cause I know I have a friend, my best friend from a different school. She's in high school. She has another friend who wants to commit suicide cause her stepmother doesn't like her and always hits her and everything, but nobody will listen to Melissa so it's no use even trying to talk to people cause nobody will listen to her except for us. We'll keep listening.
>
> (04.26.93.18).

One of the research purposes was to hear the voices of a small group of young women. I wanted to create space to say what was important. There were times when it was easy to sit back and listen to their self-initiated conversations, their stories and their talk about feelings. At other times the silence and tension were unendurable. I did not know what to say to end the silence. There were times when I felt silenced because I did not know what to say. I felt compelled to keep the conversation going with what I could say, when the silence was too difficult to bear. When it was a difficult task, I questioned myself about how best to elicit conversation. When the conversation was intense, I questioned myself about what made it so simple. Ultimately, however, I was concerned with the silence and the speaking and what contributed to making it that way.

In this chapter, I focus on the silence and the speaking. It was important that I listened closely during the silences as well as during the speaking. There were times in the conversation where the girls' silence was caused by 'not knowing.' I related the girls' 'knowing' and 'not knowing' to their voices or lack thereof. The phrase, "I don't know" was heard often during our conversations and I noticed during the transcriptions and analysis that it could mean a number of things. I tell about how the 'not knowing' relates to the silencing.

Knowing/ Not knowing

It was very important to me, as a woman researcher, to listen to these young women speak, to help them articulate what they knew and to help them question themselves and others about what they did not know. Sometimes, we talked specifically about knowing and not knowing. There were many times, however, that these young women chose to answer, "I don't know" during our conversations. These "I don't knows" intrigued me. I believed they were used for many reasons, only one being a choice to remain silent.

In the beginning of the research, some conversations implied the young women had a fear of writing tests and a need to know the 'correct' answers. I was drawn into their protestations that teachers were not telling them what they needed to know for tests. It made me sad to think that what was really important for these girls was to know what others, in this case teachers, wanted them to know; they were only interested in knowing what others wanted them to know because of the grades.

Their anxiety came out in their conversations.

> Helen: How are you supposed to study for a test when he doesn't even show us what to study?
> Annie: Yeah that's right.
> (03.11.93.09).

> Marissa: He doesn't even tell us what's in it and when he tells us what's in it
> Paula: It's not gonna be on it.
> Nikki: And then he puts these different things in it ...
> (04.05.93.02)

When I reflect upon the powerlessness they felt, I see their dilemma. On the one hand, thinking they are not in control may eventually lead them to search inside themselves for the answers by trusting themselves. However, when evaluation comes from the teacher in the traditional sense, they are forced to question the teacher for her/his answers if they are interested in a high grade. After many years of seeing their teachers as having the answers, they may get caught into looking outside themselves for their answers rather than looking inward.

In the next passage they looked to me for suggestions as to what to talk about. Because this was one of the first conversations, they may have wanted to "do it right" so they looked to me as the authority. They wanted to do what was expected of them.

> Val: Any ideas on how I can stop being a teacher here and get you to decide on what you want to talk about and what you want to read?
> Annie: I don't think you're being a teacher.
> Nikki: Me either.
> Val: No?
> Annie: We need you to tell us what to do a little because we have no idea what we're supposed to be doing here.
> (03.18.93.01-02)

In the same way, Paula looked for suggestions from others, "What are we supposed to talk about?" (03.18.93.07) rather than saying what she was interested in talking about.

Contrary to wanting answers from other people, there were other times when they felt they were not being listened to (except in Paula's case). This, at times, caused them to feel apprehension, anger and frustration.

> Val: I don't know what I want to say. But I want you to think about what you want to tell people. What do you want to say to educators, especially educators, to teachers, to people concerned about the growth and development of other people. What do you want to say? ... What I want from the thesis is

for you to tell people what is really important for you to say ... Because sometimes, and I remember what it was like, adults never listened to me when I was young.

Malory: Do you think anything has changed?

Paula: They listen to me.

Val: ... for the most part I don't think adults listen to kids. Maybe it's that some people don't listen to other people. I don't know if it's just age or

Annie: I think they think we're stupid cause we're younger.

Malory: And we don't know nothing.

Annie: Cause my mom says like I've listened many more years than you have and I know that much more than you.

Marissa: They think they know what's best for us.

Malory: Especially our education. You're gonna be this when you grow up; you're gonna be that when you grow up. It's our lives, our decision.

Annie: And this time like, this day and age we learn more in school than they did, so it's not like we're isolated from knowledge or anything.

Val: And that's what I want to include in the research, and how do we get people to listen to us? How do we get them to listen to us?

Malory: We can't, we can't make them listen to us.

Val: No, we can't make them but

Paula: Try to.

(04.19.93.04 -05)

Getting adults to listen to and to trust the knowledge of these young women would certainly be empowering. However, no one can be 'made' to listen. Rather than using their energy and creativity to solve real problems in their lives, these girls seemed to focus on the frustration of not being heard. Malory's statement about not being able to 'make them listen to us' reminded me of the hopelessness I feel when I cannot see any way through a problem. I was pleased, however, when Paula expressed a willingness to look for an answer to getting adults to listen. She helped us refocus on looking for possibilities rather than focusing only on the problem. I believe these young women were not accustomed to searching themselves for their answers. Perhaps that is a reason they were stuck on the problem.

When we had a mini-conversation (one or two girls at the same time) in the library, I was surprised when two of the girls expressed concern about knowing too much. They proposed that knowing too much was harmful. We began talking about their science projects and Marissa interjected, "It's not good to know too much [about the environment] cause then you get worried about it." Later in the conversation, Nikki agreed with Marissa, "Forget about it and be happy" (04.22.93.06). I questioned her statement to the question, "So you don't think 'the more I know the happier I am?' " She quickly explained, "But if you know a lot and everything all you would think about is environment and just be worried about everything and don't do this, don't do this ... and they think about it, like what to do, what to do" (04.22.93.07). I am curious about their anxiety about knowing too much. Perhaps it is safer to not know.

There were many places where the girls would say, "I don't know." Sometimes, in the conversation there would be many "I don't knows." It troubled me when these girls would repeat these disempowering words. I think about the different instances in which I say them. Sometimes I just don't know because I have never thought about a topic or problem long enough. Other times this is what I say when I don't want to reveal what I have on my mind. I choose to stay silent in three kinds of situations. One situation occurs when I'm not feeling very good about myself and I don't want to be perceived as ignorant when I say what I really think. Another situation is when I want to hear what other people have to say first, to see if my thoughts are similar. A third situation is when I am interested in knowing what the other person thinks without any influence from me.

Thinking about my own "I don't knows" encouraged me to question the intentions of these young women. In the following passages, I attempted to infer what "I don't know" meant. I believe the meaning depended upon the topic and the environment. In the April 26 conversation, we talked about when is the right time for young women to have sexual relations. Both Nikki's and Malory's "I don't knows" led me to believe the topic of conversation was uncomfortable.

> Val: So for you sex means love too? You have to love the person or really care about the person? ... Nikki, how about you?
> Nikki: I don't know, when you're ready and all that ...When you feel like, I don't know ...
> Val: When would you know a guy well enough to have sex with him?
> Malory: I don't know ... When you know you love him.
> Val: When you know you love him. Okay, so that might be like tomorrow or it might be
> Malory: Three years from now. I don't know ...
> (04.26.93.10)

I inferred that these young women were uncomfortable with expressing themselves about sex. Of course, they may have had other reasons for their discomfort. I questioned Nikki about what she liked in men and she responded, "I don't like when they boss you around and all they think about is sex and all that and I don't know. Justin takes me out and everything. I don't know, he treats me nice and all that. I don't know" (04.26.93.19). In the last passage, as I recall some of Nikki's other stories about boyfriends, I could interpret her "I don't knows" as remaining silent about her story of Tyler's 'attempted assault.' There were other "I don't knows" in Nikki's story of talking to Justin on the telephone.

> On the phone, you know, I'm like I don't talk cause, I don't know, I'm talking and I'm on but I don't know what to say. It's like when I'm talking to my friend it's like I'm always talking and, [with Justin] I don't know, I have nothing to say ... And he won't talk to me until I talk to him, it's like, trying to think hard on what to say and I get frustrated and everything. He goes, "How come you're so quiet?" and I go, "I don't know." He goes, "How come you never talk?" "I don't know" and then I'm quiet. I don't know what to say ... I [say in my mind] "I don't know, I don't know.

> What should I say?" and all that and it's, I don't know, like something like I don't know and I feel stupid if I say something ... I go, "I don't know what to talk about." He goes, "Anything, at least I'll know that you're there ... at least you're there." (05.13.93.18)

The uncertainty and anxiety that Nikki expressed caused me to feel deeply for this gentle and kind young woman. It was difficult for me to hold myself back from saying, "Well, what about him? He is also responsible for the conversation and the relationship." I wished she hadn't felt so guilty about not knowing what to say. The pressure she must have had to maintain this very important relationship must have been enormous. I believe her "I don't knows" showed she felt ignorant, since she searched herself for something to say to Justin and could not think of anything.

In the following quote, I believe Nikki's "I don't knows" meant she did not think a lot about what I asked of her. In a one-on-one conversation, I asked, "What did you get most from coming here?" She responded, "I don't know, talk more and I don't know. I don't know ... When we talk and what we talk about ... Like how all of us talk and everything and what we think and like and what we thing about this and that. I don't know" (05.27.93.09).

The "I don't knows" in the following transcript of Paula's conversation seemed to be different than Nikki's, even though the question was similar. In the following passage it seemed like Paula said, "I don't know" when she was leading up to something she believed to be true, almost a lead-in to her beliefs.

> Fun, I don't know, learn more things, you know, like reading books and you making us talk out to each other and our little one-on-one sessions ... feelings ... I don't know ... [I learned] that everybody's got their own opinions to everything, I guess, I don't know. I guess when you ask questions they all had different suggestion and we all have different opinions. (05.27.93.10-11)

I got the feeling that Paula did not want to appear too self-assured. This may be Paula's way of protecting herself and others with whom she is in relationship, by being more open to any type of criticism or comment that may therefore occur.

In going through the transcripts, I noticed that I used "I don't know" too. In the following passage, I believe the reason I used "I don't know" was to elicit conversation. I wanted to leave spaces open for these young women to explore for themselves rather than looking to me, as an authority figure, for their answers. Paula asked, "So what are we gonna talk about." I replied, "I don't know. About something that came up in the book?" (03.18.93.05).

꧁ *Silence/speaking* ꧂

The subject of this thesis is listening to young women. It was important for me to be sensitive to why they did not speak. Occasionally, I had the opportunity to check the silences out with the girls in our one-on-one conversations. There were times when I approached them purposefully about silencing. Other times I did not have an opportunity to ask about the silence I noticed.

In school, silencing occurred with some of their teachers. There were times when they were not happy with a teacher for one reason or another and responded with silence. When I asked whether or not they would consider talking to their teachers about their resentment or hostility, they gave reasons for their silence.

> Val: Do you ever try to talk to them?
> Nikki: No.
> Val: No? What do you think might happen if you talk to them?
> Nikki: Mr. Fisher wouldn't listen.
> Marissa: He said we don't pay attention or something. Cause he might think we're criticizing what he teaches.
> (03.11.93.09)

This reminded me of my own silencing with teachers who had the power to grade me according to their own criteria, which seemed arbitrary at times.

Other silencing occurred with parents. In this research, some of the girls talked about feeling silenced by their mothers. They felt unable to speak up for themselves when they had conflicts with their mothers. The following excerpts indicate their silencing.

When I asked Nikki about conflicts with her mom, she responded, "Well, I can't yell back at her ... So I just sit and listen to her ... I can't yell back" (03.11.93.13). She was silenced and felt frustrated when she was not allowed to speak up for herself during a conflict. On another occasion I asked the group, "Think of a time when you didn't say what was on your mind and ... why you didn't say anything" (03.15.93.10). Marissa responded, "When I get into a fight with my mother. I don't, don't talk back and all that. So I just keep my mouth shut ... [I feel] anger ... Just cause she's older it doesn't mean that [she's right]" (03.15.93.10-11).

The young women were sometimes silent about their fathers. Annie did not talk about her father very often. I believe it still hurt her to talk about it so she chose to remain silent about the stories. Malory was silenced by her father. She was frightened she would say something wrong in the presence of her dad so she remained silent. In her silence she learned methods of manipulation from him.

In addition to being silenced in the presence of authority figures such as teachers and parents, the young women were also visibly silent during some of our conversations. It seemed to me that during most of the conversations, especially in the beginning, at least one girl chose to remain silent. One example was when Malory and Annie said very little at the March 15 conversation. This prompted me to set up the one-on-one conversations for subsequent visits to allow them room to talk. Many of the silences were the consequences of conflicts within the group. Often the one-on-one conversations helped me understand their reasons for their silences.

On March 22, Paula did not express her anger verbally but did so when she scribbled vehemently with her pen on a piece of paper during the conversation. When I looked back at the transcripts close to that date, I found something that may have been linked to this anger. "Just when probably I get into a fight with somebody and then, like a friend, or somebody, and when you know you're right and I don't know, just when you don't want to say anything ... [I feel] angry" (03.15.93.12). I believe this was her way of indicating her discomfort about being in conflict with someone in our conversation group or someone who was closely connected.

Other times the young women were silent only with the group as a whole, that is, two or more girls would choose to side-talk or write notes to each other during the conversation. For example, on April 29 first Nikki and Paula, and then Nikki and Marissa were side-talking. These same three were also side-talking on May 3rd. There were also conversations where these same three exchanged notes. They chose to remain silent only with the whole group (April 19, April 26, and May 3). Their silence indicated a rejection of the others and me.

When the other girls from the class were invited (April 29), there were many uncomfortable silences by almost everyone. During this conversation, the tension in the room was so extreme that I decided to confront the silence. I challenged them by acknowledging this silent space they all created. I thought this may have provoked some talk. However, it only created more uncomfortable silences.

> There are a lot of things we won't say in public that we will say in private ... How does it affect your relationships with each other? ... (silence) I really shut everybody up. (silence) No comments on how this might be a problem? (silence) ... Is that how much pressure there is? (silence) Okay let's choose another topic. (04.29.93.05)

Later in this conversation, Annie expressed her desire to talk about the topic but did not want to do so in the large group. I had mixed feelings about her expression. I had naively hoped that we could talk about anything in this group. However, I was pleased that she wanted to express herself on the topic in front of the whole group. I asked, "Annie, do you have a story [about peer pressure]?" She responded, "Yeah, but I don't want to say it now" (04.29.93.08). Later in our one-on-one conversation, Annie told a story of peer pressure and explained that the reason she did not want to share in front of the whole group was that, "I just don't like these people ... I just don't want them to know about me" (04.29.93.11).

Some stories of silencing were about the silencing by young men. As an attractive young woman, Malory had indicated on a few occasions that she was 'harassed' by men, even though she was not interested. The following story tells about her silencing when a man considerably older than her kissed her with no regard as to how she felt about him.

> There's lots of peer pressure. Especially guys; they're good at that ... They don't get the hint. You say you don't like them and they keep bugging you. [In a restaurant over the weekend] a thirty year old Vietnamese man kissed me. I was so grossed out cause I was supposed to meet my boyfriend there ... So I'm waiting ... [these Vietnamese men] were drunk ... and they kept looking over at us and [Annie] understood what they were saying, which I'm not gonna repeat cause it's disgusting, and one of them came over to us and he's ... singing to me. And I just kind of rolled my eyes and turned away with my cheek facing him and he kissed me ... I put my head down and I was talking to myself. It was gross. And then another one came up to me ... Like when you say you're not interested you're not interested. God! They're so stupid sometimes ... So stupid. I kind of grew up in a woman-dominated house where like you leave the toilet seat up and you're dead ... But I'm kind of prejudiced against guys.
> (04.19.93.12)

Nikki's story about Tyler's attempted assault was similar because she remained silent. "Tyler would have got mad," she explained, if she would have chosen to speak out about it (04.26.93.04). She also said she felt silenced when she talked to Justin on the telephone. It seemed to me that Justin had given Nikki the responsibility for continuing the conversation. The problem was she took this responsibility and in so doing was numbed by it. She found it difficult to find something to talk about.

The silences paralyzed the girls voices. They needed to have a safe outlet because it was important for them to have someone to talk to, someone they could trust. For example, Annie claimed she missed talking with Marissa, especially when Malory was not in school. She, however, did not choose to do so since she was having difficulty trusting Marissa. Nikki also expressed that it was important to have a friend she could talk to and trust. Annie and Malory became good friends because they could tell each other anything.

Many times, however, the girls took the risk and spoke up, regardless of what others may say. Sometimes the girls defended others openly in front of their peers. Both Paula and Marissa spoke up for those young women not involved in the research. Marissa also defended her friend, Augustine, a number of times. In a one-on-one conversation, Nikki was proud when she had defended Marissa when someone she was talking to was critical.

Connecting with One Another

There was an energy during some of the conversations. This energy lived in the stories of the shared experiences of these young women. In analyzing the transcripts, there was enthusiasm and camaraderie I had not noticed in other conversations. The girls maintained the conversation throughout the allotted time and there were few silences. These conversations evolved through the deep interest of each person in the group and in the topic. No one person dominated the conversation and all young women were provided with and took the opportunity to talk. The first conversation that evolved in such a way was the time we talked about the stories of the supernatural (03.18.93). This topic evolved from a line in the book we were reading Round the Bend. All young women in the group told about their experiences or about the experiences of others concerning the supernatural. The topic evolved from the girls' talk. I was involved in an authentic way since I was interested in the topic and wanted to know and understand more. This was the first conversation that had this energy. There were other conversations after this one that occasionally had some of this type of energy. However, not until after the camping trip did that same energy return and magnify.

Three days after the camping trip we came together in conversation. Some of the girls brought in photographs and we spent the first half hour talking about the camping trip pictures. The excitement and energy in the retelling was tremendous and I felt the exchange was authentic.

On May 13th, the last scheduled conversation also contained much energy. Even though one young woman chose to be silent, the conversation was self-sustaining and the shared stories of elementary school dominated. There was also some teasing which kept the conversation fairly light.

There was another 'kind' of conversation that was self-sustaining which I did not become aware of until I analyzed the transcripts. The energy of the shared stories shifted to a new energy, filled with questions and new answers, primarily supplied by the young women in the group. These discussions were philosophical ones, in which the young women negotiated meaning. The conversation unfolded through their inquiries, opinions and thoughts about topics. During our conversation about God and homosexuality (June 3), the girls maintained a steady flow of discussion through which they learned from each other and spoke about what they believed. Each young woman had given their own thoughts about both topics. At times they were adamant about their positions. At other times, I could tell that thoughts were reformulating and shifting. I believe this environment helped these young women negotiate their own meaning.

> Annie: I believe in God but I'm not religious ...
> Val: You believe in God but you're not religious?
> Malory: Yeah.
> Val: Malory, you too? Marissa, do you believe in God? Yeah? Nikki, Paula? What does he or she look like?
> (06.03.93.12)

This question initiated further conversation which led the girls into talk about God's gender. This was a time when they questioned their schooling and the bible. I enjoyed this conversation because they were asking and answering their own questions. They were searching themselves for the answers. I believe they felt safe in exploring this topic, without an 'authority' to give them the truth.

Another topic where I believe these young women negotiated meaning was homosexuality (June 17). They searched their experiences, shared their stories, asked new questions and negotiated with one another as to the meaning of their conversation.

I thought both conversations helped everyone, including me, understand each other and these topics in a slightly different way. We negotiated with each other to come to a new understanding.

Listening for the Voice of Self

When I reflect upon not knowing, I am reminded how I was never really taught to trust myself to make my own meaning. I only looked to the authorities for my answers. It is easier to have someone else give the answers. Does that tell me that my answers come from the outside only? Or to believe someone else rather than myself? I think about all the times I would not trust myself, but looked to others for answers.

As I look back to the literature, I discover many similarities. Gilligan's (1989) words about voice resound with this research. Adolescence is a time when young women, such as Nikki, Paula, and Marissa, "are in danger of losing their voices and thus losing connection with others." I believe they told what I wanted to hear but also what was allowed. This is "also a time when girls" such as Annie who are "gaining voice and knowledge, are in danger of knowing the unseen and speaking the unspoken and thus losing connection with what is commonly taken to be 'reality' " (p. 25). I believe Annie expressed what she knew and was 'in danger' of knowing too much. I believe Malory struggled with "gaining voice and knowledge," where she expressed herself according to her knowing, and "acting like a lady," where she did what she thought was expected of her.

Chapter 11

Reflecting on the Research

I have been changed by this research. I have received from it more than I thought possible and more than I could imagine, from beginning to end. Making the first move toward committing to a topic was a huge step. Subsequently, shaping the plan from existing literature and from my own experiences was extraordinarily creative for me. The topic needed to be one where I could entrust my passion, one where I could care deeply about the process as well as the product. I needed to trust my capabilities of producing a final document faithful to my intentions. I believe I did this by holding the vision of fidelity first to the young women involved, then to the research.

My thoughts from planning to completion were consistently aimed at caring for the young women involved. I was ready to change my plans in order to listen and help create an environment where these girls could feel comfortable in expressing their thoughts. I was interested in allowing the research to evolve, to grow and to change according to what transpired in the conversations.

In this chapter I express my feelings, thoughts and personal conclusions from my experiences throughout this research project.

Planning

In the summer prior to beginning my research, I struggled with my own developing voice and 'empowerment' more than ever before. I questioned what 'empowerment' meant for me. I did find some answers but I also found many more questions. In addition to developing my own sense of power, I questioned my own actions and thoughts when I helped others gain their own power. At the time, I was most concerned with appropriately supporting my Little Sister. This, in turn, connected to my previous school teaching experience.

My faculty advisor, Jean, encouraged me to think about these things in order to formulate a plan for my thesis project. She recommended some reading that provoked in me a longing that developed into a passion. This was the time I made a commitment to the topic and to the research. I would not turn back.

I searched and read and then prepared a research proposal. I needed to be vulnerable and open if I was to be authentic. It seemed easy to write because I had thought about it for many years. However, in presenting my proposal in a department seminar, I began to feel unsure of leaving myself as open as I had. I believe I was concerned about approval, not necessarily by the peers I knew since I was certain they would approve, but by peers not known to me and those faculty members who may not accept my story as narrative truth. I realize now that was part of my developing voice and part of my growing.

In addition to preparing my thesis proposal, I needed to make a connection with someone I did not know well, the teacher, Mr. Jones, who was a teacher/administrator at an 'inner city' school in Edmonton. It was uncomfortable for me to approach someone to help me attract the young women needed to make my plan a reality. I was concerned he would reject my project.

The Conversation Space

After the initial conversation with the whole class of grade nine girls, I needed to have a safe space where we could come together to talk, where we would not be interrupted and where our conversation could not be overheard. I did not focus on the importance of where we would meet because I wanted to be a non-obtrusive guest in the school. "Any space would work for me," was what I thought in the beginning. I was pleased that the only space for us was a small room that was once a teacher's lounge, now used only by a small number of math students directly following our Monday conversations.

This room was an ideal space. The room was large enough that we felt comfortable but not too large that we might lose our concentration on the conversation. There was a large table in the middle of the room, which was equipped with chairs for all of us. The room was situated at the end of the hallway, where few students milled about. No teachers, support staff or students needed to pass the room to go to any other classroom. Occasionally, however, we spotted the custodian sweeping the floors or carrying out regular maintenance duties. At other times, a student would come by to satisfy a curiosity or speak to one of the young women in the group. It seemed a perfect place.

The Reading

The reading, while not a major research focus, was intended to initiate conversation and to present new situations for deliberation. I thought it would be a large part of what we talked about during the conversations. However, the research did not work in that way.

In the beginning, we read a short story. I distributed another short story for them to read outside the conversation time. Only two of the six read the story. This did not work. We persevered. I selected our first book which had a very dynamic beginning and I thought it would initiate interest. It did not. Only one girl kept up to the reading to which we had agreed.

I began reading from a book at the beginning of our conversations. I read the story Round the Bend for approximately ten minutes at the beginning of each session. After three weeks, the interest level dropped and I decided to return the book unfinished. At this point we all agreed to try again and, after meeting with a reading specialist, decided upon Stonewords, a story of a girl and a ghost who lived in her house. The story was chosen because the girls seemed to be interested in spirits and ghosts. I thought, wrongly, that we could complete the story. Only two of us did. Paula was the only one to keep up with her commitment to the reading. The reading just was not important enough for the others to continue. They had other important things in their lives.

The Topics Discussed

We spent much of our time talking about relationships with friends, peers, parents and teachers. Some topics were initiated by me. Sometimes I planned them before I met with the young women. Other times I asked questions which evolved during the conversation. These spontaneous questions or comments were a part of the conversation and, because I was a member of the group, I felt some responsibility for expressing my thoughts, seeking clarification or satisfying my curiosity.

Generally, however, the girls looked to me to direct the conversation. Because of this, I wanted to redirect some responsibility to the girls so I suggested we take turns leading the conversations. They were open to this suggestion, and each had the opportunity to be the 'director.' I was impressed by their willingness to be involved in this way.

I have included a list of the significant topics (those which I felt were important) in Appendix E.

Weaving Our Stories Together

I believe collaboration is invaluable as a tool for learning. Collaboration empowers the participants, since it involves each voice having a space to be heard and respected. I believe we can collectively and individually solve any problem or create anything. I am certain, that in the space of time these five young women and I had together, everything was done to make the process as collaborative as was possible.

I was concerned that my experiences as a teacher in a school could have influenced the collaboration. However, these young women told stories or used words I would not have heard if I was seen as an authority figure, such as a teacher or administrator. Also, at the beginning of the research, Paula claimed that she didn't see me as a teacher in the first class. Another example was when Marissa used the word 'fuck' while explaining something. When she realized I was there, she gasped. Others gasped as well but it was indicative of their trust and their openness to say things they would not say around teachers.

I strongly believe that collaboration works best when all members perceive there is a need. For this research I was the one to perceive this need. The young women fully understood the research but, as far as I know, did not see the need in the same way I did. Because it was voluntary, however, I believe each girl had her own need to belong to this research group. Before they decided whether they would remain with the research, I talked to them about the research and what my intentions were. The following passage illustrates my fidelity to collaboration.

> I want to explain to you why I want everybody to talk and everyone to have an opinion. I think it's really important that we all listen to each other ... I want to listen to what you have to say and what's important for you to talk about and listen to what silences you and what helps you talk about what is really important to you. That's my intention, but what that's going to look like I have no idea. (03.01.93.01)

Collaboration includes a mutual goal. A mutual goal underlying every meeting was that each young woman was encouraged to share her thoughts, feelings and stories. I felt that I needed to open up my thoughts, feelings and stories to these young women as well.

In choosing books to read I wanted these girls to make the selections. Each young woman gave input into the types of books they read and which ones they liked. I chose the books primarily based upon the interest shown by the girls and the availability.

Each young woman made personalized lists (Appendix C) of important topics so we could choose what we were discussing. In the same way, the girls described their reading habits to me by filling out a questionnaire. Unfortunately, I did not think about collaborating in the design of this questionnaire and so created it myself. I made a list of available books that might have interested them (Appendix D). This list was designed according to their taste in reading; they chose collectively from this list the ones we would read.

I asked each young woman for input throughout the research project. I was eager to hear what they really wanted to say. After a few sessions, I felt that by leading the group I was ultimately in charge. I did not feel it was collaborative for one person throughout the research to ask questions or direct the discussion. I did not want this so I asked if each one of them wanted to lead the group. They agreed, however, some were reluctant.

> Val: What do you think if you would take the role of the director for one class?
> Nikki: It's hard. I don't know.
> Val: Think you could start observing what I do or what would be helpful in the class? ... Do you think you could do it? Cause you wouldn't have to talk the whole time, you could just bring up a topic or when we get into our book we could, I don't know, ask questions or start talking about the sorts of the things that are important to you.
> Nikki: Yeah, I guess.
> Val. Then we could join in or you could ask us how we feel about. Do you think you could do that?
> Nikki: I don't know.
> Val: You don't know. Paula do you think you could do that?
> Paula: I think it would be a good idea.
> Val: You think it would be a good idea?
> Paula: You'd help us out wouldn't you?
> Val: Sure, I could do that.
> Paula: Kay, it's okay with me.
> (03.18.93.02)

Annie was the first of the young women to lead our discussion. She did not prepare for this in any way and did not know what to say. After this conversation, she told me how uncomfortable she was that it did not go as she hoped. Because of her response, I prepared some questions as a guide when the young women were leading. The questions were prepared according to the topics the young women identified as their preferences (See Appendix C). These questions were not intended to take away from what the girls might discuss or to dominate the conversation. I stressed these were optional and that we would remain with topics or questions that came up spontaneously, if that was agreeable to the group. I was most interested in spontaneous conversation.

I consistently encouraged the conversation to go in any direction. A change of topic occurred when someone in the group redirected it. There were also times when I spontaneously asked a question or redirected the conversation.

I also believe that collaboration occurred in the writing of the chapters. I checked with them for their approval about what I had written and also for anything they may want to add, delete or change.

From this experience with collaboration with these young women, I found that such an environment grows slowly. In the beginning, the young women were interested in their own conversations. In addition, there were more disputes within the group and more time spent side-talking. Toward the end of the research there was greater collegiality and collaboration.

In the last two conversations in June, the conversations were almost completely sustained by these young women, with very little prompting or questioning by me. Their shared stories, thoughts and opinions came spontaneously, from their deep rooted interest in the topic of conversation.

Collaboration, to me, means interdependence. We came together to listen and to talk, to better understand ourselves and others. I believe that the research empowered the participants, allowing them a chance to speak and be heard.

Showing My Interest

I have a deep interest in supporting people around me. I enjoyed being with these young women for whom I grew to care. It was important for me to show them I appreciated our time together. I did this in a caring and nurturing way, as I was more attentive to their voices and was more 'other-conscious' rather than 'self-conscious.'

The girls knew I enjoyed being with them. I showed this in many ways. I was prepared for the conversation with tape recorder, pens and paper. I did my 'homework' (the reading and letters/journals). I also showed I enjoyed being there by being on time, within five minutes of their class start time, and eager to make necessary arrangements to meet with them after school. I brought homemade cookies and chocolate-covered Easter eggs, the way my mother shows she cares.

I showed my caring in other ways. I listened intently and trusted that the process would unfold in a way true to these young women. It was important to listen to their words and actions. I believed their stories, thoughts and feelings as their truth for themselves. I believed in them and in the research.

Showing Their Interest in the Research

The young women showed their interest in the research in many ways. Of course, they chose to belong to the research by volunteering, so they had their own motives for joining the discussion sessions.

As the conversations continued they chose to remain with the group. They could have chosen to leave at any time. I interpreted this to mean they received a lot of value by joining the group. In the same way, by their consistent attendance, they showed me they remained interested. They could have, instead, showed up at their class for roll call and then skipped the class entirely.

They also showed they remained interested and faithful by continuing to talk. Even though they silenced themselves during particular conversations, they were eager to talk during the one-on-one conversations. Again, they showed they valued the conversation.

There were many comments and questions about the research. Some young women, more than others, asked questions or made comments about the thesis. This affirmed for me that they were interested in what I wanted to accomplish. Paula asked me more questions about the research than the others. I am not certain about the reason, since I believe they were all equally interested. She asked things like, "We get to read this right? ... Is this going to the public library?" (04.05.93.11); "Are you gonna get us to write a little thing about our self about what you want us to put in the little thesis?" (04.19.93.02); "Are we allowed to take these books for our family to read? ... Do we all get a copy?" (06.17.93.16). Her interest was real. She asked questions that were going to affect her experience when the thesis was completed. These were real questions, real conversation.

Marissa also showed her interest by her comments and questions. "What are you gonna write about us?" (05.06.93.07) and "What's the book gonna be called? ... The 'Young Women,' that's good" (05.27.93.03). Other inquiries were similar, and when I began writing the chapters, the girls were even more interested.

Writing it Up

In writing the thesis, I extracted from the transcripts the conversations and comments which demonstrated the experiences, stories, opinions and feelings of the young women involved.

This was my interpretation completely. I told their stories. I searched for what I thought demonstrated their ways of being and their personality and identity. I got a chance to know each one deeply and care for each one intensely. With fondness in my heart and determination in my soul, I committed to be truthful and loyal to these five young women.

I appreciated their reflections on the early drafts of their chapters. Before we concluded our conversations, I was very curious to know how these five young women would respond to what had been written in their individual chapters. I was interested in getting their feedback so when I had written at least ten pages for each young woman, I asked each of them to read their own chapter and respond. I was very proud of the writing I had done and wanted to show that I cared about each girl by being faithful to them and telling the story I heard them tell. They all gave me their approval for what I had written. They seemed excited and happy. There were only two girls who wanted minor changes to their chapters. The other three concluded it was not necessary to make any changes.

Echoes

There were many times during the research where I was reminded of my youth. The young women's voices could have been mine almost twenty years ago. It surprised me that I relived so much of my past through the stories of these girls. This was my opportunity to further understand my adolescence experiences.

In my late teens, I began questioning gender equality and stereotyped roles. I remember saying, "I'm glad I don't feel obligated to take on the roles traditionally prescribed for women." Little did I know that I continued living out the traditional roles, especially when I entered into a marriage before I was twenty years old. At the time, I was doing what I thought best for me. I was unaware of society's influences. In a group conversation we talked about opportunities women have today compared with women in the past. In the beginning of the conversation Annie expressed, "We don't have as [many] opportunities as men, I don't know" but later she changed her views. "Our generation we could [do anything we want to]" and Malory agreed, "We can. Before we couldn't. Yeah, our generation, but before us it was like kind of still discriminated" (06.03.93.14).

I had the same attitude twenty years ago. Even though things have changed for women, the research indicates stereotyping still exists.

During one of our last one-on-one conversations, Marissa was making sense of boys and girls being treated differently by parents. "They're like, 'Oh, why didn't you call home. You stayed out so late.' 'How come [a boy] can do it?' 'Cause he's a guy. He can protect himself.' That's true but it's sexist" (06.14.93.04). I recall having a similar conversation. Is this the process we all go through when we question our femininity and sexual equality? Do these questions get answered? Do new ones evolve when old ones are answered?

There were other stories shared which echoed for me. Marissa's stories seemed the most familiar to my past. Except for having many siblings, it seemed like Marissa was telling my story. My parents supported me in doing what they thought was best for me. When I was a teenager, they could afford to give me experiences many of my peers did not have. For example, I was supported when I wanted to get my driver's license. Unlike many of my female peers, I was allowed to drive the family car when I passed my driver's test. However, I will remember the frustration I had when I felt I did not have the freedom to go out as often and stay out as late as my friends.

Parallel Stories

During the research, I think about how our stories were parallel in many ways. While sorting through my adolescence experiences, I continued to learn to support young women. Also, by talking about personal stories I was able to sort through my thoughts and the input of others to make new meaning. The young women, in the same way, talked about present and past experiences, negotiating meaning for future stories.

The topics of conversation we chose brought up my own thoughts and responses. It was interesting to retell and relive stories concerning family and friends, school stories, and stories which helped me explore what I wanted for my future. Even though I shared some of these stories, I was more interested in listening to the stories of others. It was more appropriate to use my friendships with others and this document to say what I needed to say and to negotiate meaning.

I think about how I have been changed by the research and how much I have learned and will continue to learn because of it. I have spent hundreds of hours in preparation of this final document, studying existing literature, taking the appropriate steps to have conversations with young women, transcribing the conversations, and analyzing the transcripts, journals and letters. I have told my stories and the stories of these young women. This was what I saw, what I had interpreted. I also think about the 'forbidden' stories, those stories that may remain locked up forever. I am certain I did not hear many of those. How will those stories manifest themselves in the lives of these young women?

I reflect upon how this research has affected the young women involved. Where are the girls right now, almost four months after our final conversation? What have they learned and how will this research and this document impact their lives? What have they learned about interacting with a caring adult?

I think about Marissa many times when I think about my youth. How will her life be different than mine, considering the many similarities I felt we had in growing up? Will her dreams about becoming a business woman develop or will she abandon those dreams when she decides she would rather get married, like I did?

What about Malory? Will she continue to have the dilemma concerning being the 'tomboy' versus being the 'lady'? Which one will be overpowered by the other? Or will the two come to some compromise? I also think often of how she changed her voice depending upon how she wanted to affect people around her.

What will Annie, the poet, be involved in now and in the near future? Will she use her intelligence and talents to create a life she dreams of or will she continue on her path of 'living for the moment' to choose short term pleasures over behaviors which have long term gains as their goals? I also think about all the stories she told me and how foreign to my youth those experiences were. Did she have any forbidden stories which may affect her future stories?

Is Nikki still curious about what it would be like to live with her father? Will she continue pursuing physical challenges? When will her life be filled with the children she said she wanted?

When I think of Paula, I immediately think about the strong base from which it seemed she started. The love she has for her family is deep-rooted. The members of her family seem to have much influence over how she sees her future stories. Will she choose future stories they want her to live or, will she be encouraged to choose her own stories?

The Researcher's Final Reflections

In this research I learned more about trusting in myself, in my own authority. My confidence as researcher, writer, teacher, student and friend has grown, even though it may have been very painful at times. I often struggled with knowing when to turn to myself to search for answers and when to get help from others such as Jean, who was very helpful, supportive and encouraging. In my experience of putting this document together, I have learned many things and know that my learning will continue long after the document has been completed.

In telling their stories for them, I hope I have been faithful to each young woman in the research.

REFERENCES

Abrams, Eileen. (1981). A curriculum guide to women's studies for the middle school grades 5-9. Old Westbury, New York: The Feminist Press.

American Association of University Women Educational Foundation. (1992). How schools shortchange girls. Washington, DC: AAUW Educational Foundation & National Education Association.

Amos, Tori. (1991). Silent all these years. Little Earthquakes [compact disc]. Scarborough, Ontario: Warner Canada Ltd.

Apple, Michael. (1990). Series editor's introduction. In L. Christian-Smith, Becoming a woman through romance. New York: Routledge.

Bach, Hedy. (1993). Listening to girls' voices: Narratives of experience. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta.

Baker, Maureen. (1985). What will tomorrow bring?... Ottawa, Ontario: Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

Bateson, Mary Catherine. (1989). Composing a life. New York: Penguin.

Beach, Richard. (1985). Discourse conventions and researching response to literary dialogue. In C. Cooper (Ed.), Researching response to literature and the teaching of literature: Points of departure (pp. 103-127). Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Belenky, Mary F.; Clinchy, Blythe M.; Goldberger, Nancy R.; Tarule, Jill M. (1986). Women's ways of knowing: The development of self, voice, and mind. New York: Basic Books, Inc.

Britzman, D. (1990). In Connelly, F. Michael and Clandinin, D. Jean. Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. Educational Researcher, 19(5), 2-14.

Brown, Lyn Mikel; Gilligan, Carol. (1992). Meeting at the crossroads: Women's psychology and girls' development. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Bruner, Jerome. (1987). Life as narrative. Social Research, 54(1), 11-32.

Canadian Teachers' Federation. (1991). A cappella: The realities, concerns, expectations and barriers experienced by adolescent women in Canada.

Christian-Smith, Linda K. (1990). Becoming a woman through romance. New York: Routledge.

Conrad, Pam. (1990). Stonewords. New York: Harper & Row.

Connelly, F. Michael and Clandinin, D. Jean. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. Educational Researcher, 19(5), 2-14.

Cooper, Charles R. (Ed.). (1985). Researching response to literature and the teaching of literature: Points of departure. Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Cormier, Robert. (1991). We all fall down. New York: Delacorte Press.

Dale, Mitzi. (1988). Round the bend. New York: Delacorte Press.

Davies, Anne. (1988). Two caring communities: A story of connected empowerment and voice. Unpublished manuscript. University of Calgary.

Dewey, John. (1938). Experience & education. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Donelson, Kenneth L.; Nilsen, Alleen P. (1989). Literature for today's young adults. Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company.

Fine, Michelle. (1988). Sexuality, schooling, and adolescent females: The missing discourse of desire. Harvard Educational Review, 58, 29-53.

Fulwiler, Toby. (1982). The personal connection: Journal writing across the curriculum. In T. Fulwiler & A. Young (Eds.), Language connections: Writing and reading across the curriculum (pp. 15-31). Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English.

Fulwiler, Toby (Ed.). (1987). The journal book. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Boynton/Cook Publishers.

Gambell, T. (1986). Growth in response to literature. English Quarterly, 19(2), 130-141.

Gilligan, Carol. (1982). In a different voice. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Gilligan, Carol. (1989). Preface. In C. Gilligan, N. Lyons, & T. Hanmer (Eds.), (1990), Making connections: The relational worlds of adolescent girls at Emma Willard School (pp. 6-29). Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Gilligan, Carol; Lyons, Nona; Hanmer, Trudy (Eds.). (1990). Making connections: The relational worlds of adolescent girls at Emma Willard School. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Graybeal, Jean. (1987). The team journal. In T. Fulwiler (Ed.), The journal book (pp. 306-311). Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Boynton/Cook Publishers.

Graves, Donald H. (1989). Research currents: When children respond to fiction. Language Arts, 66, 776-783.

Heilbrun, Carolyn. (1988). Writing a woman's life. New York: Ballantine Books.

Hogan, Pat. (1988). Empowerment and voice: One teacher's story. Unpublished manuscript. University of Calgary.

Josselson, Ruthellen. (1987). Finding herself: Pathways to identity development in women. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass Inc.

Kostach, Myrna. (1987). No kidding: Inside the world of teenage girls. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.

Le Guin, Ursula K. (1986). Bryan Mawr commencement address. In U. Le Guin (1989), Dancing at the edge of the world (pp. 147-160). New York: Grove Press.

Miller, Jean B. (1986). Toward a new psychology of women (2nd edition). Boston: Beacon Press.

Montgomery, L. M. (1908). Anne of Green Gables. Toronto: The Ryerson Press.

Nemiroff, Greta H. (1989). Beyond "talking heads": Towards an empowering pedagogy of women's studies. Atlantis, 15, 1-16.

Noddings, Nel. (1984). Caring. Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.

Noddings, Nel. (1986). Fidelity in teaching, teacher education, and research for teaching. Harvard Educational Review, 56, 496-510.

Paley, Vivian G. (1984). Boys and girls: Superheroes in the doll corner. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Pawluk, Valerie G. (1993). One woman finds her voice. Among Teachers, 7, 5-7.

Petrosky, Anthony R. (1985). Response: A way of knowing. In C. Cooper (Ed.), Researching response to literature and the teaching of literature: Points of departure (pp. 70-83). Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing.

Richardson, Ronald W.; Richardson, Lois A. (1990). Birth order and you. North Vancouver, BC.: International Self-Counsel Press Ltd.

Rogers, Carl R. (1961). On becoming a person: A therapist's view of psychotherapy. Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Rogers, Carl R. (1969). Freedom to learn. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing.

Rosenblatt, Louise M. (1985). The transactional theory of the literary work: Implications for research. In C. Cooper (Ed.), Researching response to literature and the teaching of literature: Points of departure (pp. 33-53). Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Rudman, Masha K. (1984). Children's literature: An issues approach (2nd ed.). New York: Longman.

Salzman, Judith P. (1990). Save the world, save myself. In C. Gilligan, N. Lyons, & T. Hanmer (Eds.), Making connections: The relational worlds of adolescent girls at Emma Willard School (pp. 110-146). Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Staton, Jana. (1987). The power of responding in dialogue journals. In T. Fulwiler (Ed.), The journal book (pp. 47-63). Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Boynton/Cook Publishers.

Steiner-Adair, Catherine. (1990). The body politic. In C. Gilligan, N. Lyons, & T. Hanmer (Eds.), Making connections: The relational worlds of adolescent girls at Emma Willard School (pp. 162-182). Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Taylor, Sandra. (1989). Empowering girls and young women: The challenge of the gender-inclusive curriculum. Curriculum Studies, 21, 441-456.

Winning, Anne. (1990a). The meaning of community. ATA Magazine, 71(1), 15-18.

Winning, Anne. (1990b). The subjective experience of reading literature. Alberta English, 28(2), 23-28.

APPENDIX A
Letter to Young Women and Their Guardians

February 1993

Dear Participants,

I am presently completing my Master's of Education degree at the University of Alberta. I want to work with four or five young women your age in a research project, which is a requirement for graduation. My hope for the research is that it will be a collaboration, working with all participants in making decisions about the research. We will use literature, chosen together, as a starting point to talk and learn about things important to our lives.

I am very interested in what makes people speak up for what they believe in and also in what silences them. Your language learning teacher has agreed to your presence in this project two times per week during your regular language learning class for approximately three months. For the most part, we will share our reactions and experiences by talking in the group. You may also want to write letters or journals, but this is up to you.

If for any reason during the research project you wish to withdraw, you may do so with no penalty. I promise confidentiality in this project, where the only information to be included in any official document is that to which you agree. In addition, I promise anonymity, where pseudonyms will be used instead of your real names.

If you would like to participate please sign your name below. Because of university regulations a parent or guardian needs to sign this form as well. A copy of my research proposal is available to you and your parents or guardians if you would like to read it.

Than you for your time and consideration,

Sincerely,

Valerie Pawluk

I give my consent to participate in this research project.

Student signature

I give my consent to have my daughter participate in this research project.

Parent/Guardian signature

APPENDIX B

Reading Survey

I would appreciate your taking time to answer the following questions about your reading. You do not need to put your name on the questionnaire as it is confidential. If you need to add a comment feel free to do so.

1. What type of reading do you do?

____ newspapers ____ adventure novels ____ mysteries ____ magazines
____ biographies ____ humor ____ romance novels ____ "How to" books
____ short stories ____ sports ____ poetry ____ comics
____ school stories ____ other

2. Name the types of newspapers, magazines, or books you read. (For example: The Sun, Seventeen Magazine, Harlequin Romance, Babysitters Club, Archie Comic Books)

____

____

3. How many books do you read in a month? ____
4. How many magazines do you read in a month? ____
5. How many comic books do you read in a month? ____
6. Where do you usually get your reading? ____

____ Bookstore ____ School Library ____ School Book Club
____ Public Library ____ Supermarket ____ Friend or Relative
____ Other ______________

7. What influences you the most when you choose something to read?

____ Author ____ Cover illustration ____ Price ____ Length in pages
____ Someone recommended it to me ____ Back Cover Summary ____ Title
____ Publisher or Series Name ____ Other ________________

8. Does (do) your guardian(s) read newspapers ____? magazines ____? fiction ____?
non-fiction ____? comics ____?

9. Do you read every day? ____ Yes ____ No

10. Which best describes when you mostly read?

____ I read in __________ class (which subject/s) ____ I read at home.
____ I read during lunch hour. ____ I read while babysitting.

____ Other ________________

11. What do you usually do with the books you buy after you finish reading them?

____ Keep them ____ Trade them ____ Give them away

12. How often do you discuss your reading with others?

____ Often ____ Sometimes ____ Seldom ____ Never

13. Who do you discuss your reading with most often?

____ Parent/Guardian ____ Sister/Brother ____ Teacher ____ Friend

14. What are the most important ingredients in reading stories?

____ Happy ending ____ Easy to read ____ Fast Moving
____ Lots of love scenes ____ Exciting, interesting ____ Other ______________

15. What qualities do you like to see in the main character?

____ Intelligence ____ Strength ____ Honesty ____ Caring
____ Wealthy ____ Independence ____ Sense of humor ____ Friendliness
____ Assertiveness ____ Beauty ____ Other ____________________

16. Why do you read?

____ To relax ____ To escape problems ____ To learn about new things

17. How often do you identify yourself with the main character in a story?

____ Often ____ Sometimes ____ Seldom ____ Never

(adapted from Christian-Smith's survey in Becoming a Woman Through Romance)

APPENDIX C

List of Topics by Participants

(Written by the participants April 19, 1993)

1. Guys, school, family, sports, interests, change, image, self-esteem, peer pressure, hobbies, income tax, future, occupation, politics, dreams, goals, nightmares, economy.
2. Hobbies, goals, boyfriends, school, high school, independence, environment.
3. Ghost stories, problems teens have, teenage pregnancy, peer pressure, independence, guys, parents.
4. Guys, school; the hardest part about being a teenage girl is that the peer pressure from men, boys and other people. The second hardest is school. You want to get a good job so you have to get good grades.
5. Sports - soccer, swimming, high jump, sprinting. It's hard to be a teenager at around 14, 15, 16, 17. We are going to be killed by nuclear bombs. My dream is to have a nice future and a gorgeous wedding; have a car (Corvette)

APPENDIX D

Book List

Ask me something easy. Natlie Honeycutt. 1991. 152pp. Orchard/Jackson.

Bless the Beasts and Children. Glendon Swarthout. 1970. (Young offenders)

(The) boy who lost his face. Louis Sachar. 1989. 198pp. Knopf.

Breaking Out. Barthe DeClements. 131pp. Delacorte. (Father in jail).

Bring to a boil and separate. Hadley Irwin. 1980. 123pp Atheneum. (Divorce).

Checking on the moon. Jenny Davis. 211pp. Orchard. (Neighborhood Crime Watch).

(The) clay marble. Minfong Ho. 1991. 163pp. (Cambodian/Thai)

Connections: Short stories by outstanding writers for young adults. Donald R. Gallo, Editor. 228 pp. 1989. (Relationships).

(The) dear one. Jacqueline Woodson. 147pp. Delacorte

Dream collector. Joyce Sweeney. 197pp. 1989. Delacorte.

Family of Strangers. Susan Beth Pfeffer. 1992. 165pp. Bantam.

Family reunion. Caroline B. Cooney. 170pp. Bantam. (Unique family).

(The) leaving. (Short stories). Budge Wilson. (Canadian). 1992. 208pp. Philomel.

More to life than Mr. Right: Stories for young feminists. Rosemary Stones, Compiler. 1989. Short stories. Holt. (collection)

Paper doll. Elizabeth Feuer. 1990. 186pp. (Young love & overprotective parents).

Paradise Cafe and other stories. Martha Brooks. 1988. 124pp. Joy Street. (collection)

Round the bend. Mitzi Dale. 1991. 124pp. Delacorte. (young woman in a group home)

Scarecrow. Vladimir Zheleznikov. 1990. 148pp. Translated by Antonina W. Bouis. (peers & power struggles).

Sister. Ellen Howard. 1990. 148pp. Atheneum/Karl.

Somewhere in the darkness. Walter Dean Myers. 1992. 168pp. (Jailed father of Jimmy)

Tehanu: the last book of earthsea. Urusla LeGuin. 226pp. 1990. Atheneum/Karl.

Thunderwith. Libby Hathorn. 1991. 214pp. Little. (mother's death; girl lives with father).

(The) true confessions of Charlotte Doyle. Avi. 1990. 215pp. Orchard.

Tug of war. Joan Lingar. 1990 . Lodestar. 196pp.(1944 fleeing family).

Two Moons in August. Martha Brooks. 199pp. Joy Street. (Death of mother & 16th birthday)

We all fall down. Robert Cormier. 195pp. Delacorte.

Wild Rover. Carolyn Meyer. 201pp. 1989. McElderry. (Father in jail)

(The) wonderful story of Henry Sugar & Six more. Roald Dahl. 1977. 227pp. Knopf. (collection)

APPENDIX E

TOPICS

(Alphabetically)

Ambitions (04.29.93.08)
Beauty (04.05.93.02)
Camping (05.03.93.11), (05.10.03.01-04)
Crystal's story (03.25.93.02)
Church (04.15.93.03)
Concert - Guns N Roses (04.05.93.01)
Conflict (04.15.93.06-11)
Dreams (05.03.93.04-05)
Drinking (03.25.93.03), (05.06.93.04.05)
Drugs (05.10.03.19-20)
Earliest Memory (05.26.93.07)
Family (04.15.93.05)
Fighting (04.15.93.12)
Friends (06.17.93.01)
God (06.17.93.07)
Homosexuality (06.17.93.08)
Marriage (04.26.93.07)
Men (03.22.93.03), (04.26.93.06-07), (05.10.93.02)
Nightmares (04.08.93.08)
Parents (06.17.93.11-12)
Peer Pressure (04.19.93.11),(04.29.93.05-08)
Pregnancy (04.26.93.06)
Police (04.08.93.01-03)
Racism (03.25.93.05)
Reading (04.05.93.04)
Rejection (04.19.93.10)
Research (04.19.93.03-04), (06.17.93.01)
Responsibilities (05.10.93.11-17)
Rules (03.10.93.10)
School (05.13.93.01-02)
Sleepovers (04.05.93.01)
Supernatural (03.18.93.03), (05.10.93.06)
Teachers (05.13.93.02)
Teenage years (difficulties) (04.19.93.07-10)
Trust/honesty in relationships (04.08.93.09)